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Women Undergraduate Students at the
University of Alberta, Continuity and Change, 1950-1975

By

Glynys Sian Smith



A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment
of the
Requirements for the degree of Master of Arts
in
History

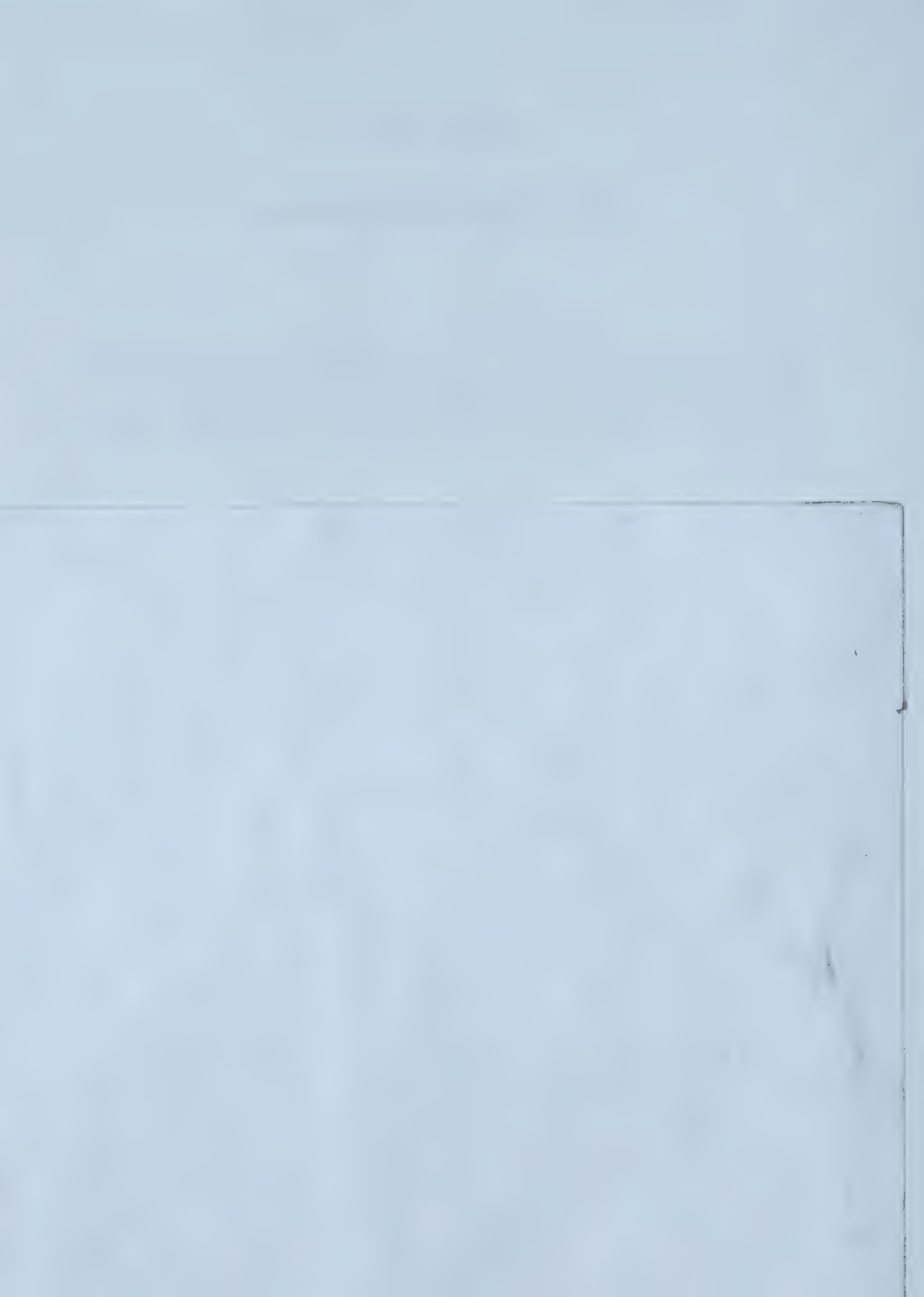
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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommended to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled "Women Undergraduate Students at the University of Alberta, Continuity and Change, 1950-1975" submitted by Glynys Sian Smith in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in History.



Abstract

The period of 1950 to 1975 represents an era of conservatism followed by one of change. During these decades, Canadian post-secondary schools grew in size, increasing their proportion of women students. Students responded to new social trends such as the women's liberation movement. The University of Alberta reflected these ideas, and between 1950 and 1975, women undergraduate students both accommodated and encouraged new values, while they simultaneously reinforcing the status quo. As a result, they presented a paradox in their choices of programs, attitudes, and extracurricular activities, incorporating aspects of change at the same time as they retained moderate values.

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Introduction

This is the story of a university ... her government ... her halls of learning ... her campus dwellers ... her growth ... her spirit ... her spirit makers ... and her social life. People ... Buildings ... This is the University of Alberta.¹

The editors of the 1964 University of Alberta yearbook, *Evergreen and Gold*, asserted in their introduction that it was not only the buildings which created a university but also the university students or the “spirit makers” who breathed life into the institution through their desire for knowledge, their spirit, and their extracurricular activities. Women undergraduate students participated in university life much like their male counterparts - attending classes, playing sports and enjoying social activities. However, male and female students both influenced and were influenced by gender specific codes of behaviour. Between 1950 and 1975, undergraduate women students affected and were affected by gender ideals that were created by mainstream Canadian society, university officials, and university students. Women students, for the most part, encouraged this change; however, they also preserved an underlying conservatism that resulted in a continuity of women’s earlier gender roles at the University of Alberta.

The history of higher education in Canada has been dealt with in a variety of ways with different foci – including the university as an educational institution, its role as a social institution, the student body, and specifically women students. Much of the literature written about universities is official histories. These studies are often inward looking and self-congratulatory, emphasising the university’s achievements and greatness.² Since the 1970s, however, historians have begun to explore other aspects of the university, such as its connection to society and its students. Although *A History of the University of Alberta, 1908-1969* by Walter H. Johns illustrates many of qualities of the official university history, such as commemoration, greatness, and progress, the author also attempts to incorporate students’ stories in chapters entitled “Students In,” each pertaining to a particular decade.³ More recently, historians have come to see the

¹ University of Alberta yearbook, *Evergreen and Gold* (1964), 1-14.

² Stewart W. Wallace, *A History of the University of Toronto, 1827-1927* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1927); W.H. Alexander, *The University of Alberta: A Retrospect, 1908-1929* (Edmonton: University of Alberta, 1929); and John Macdonald, *The History of The University of Alberta, 1908-1958* (Toronto: W.J. Gage, 1958).

³ Walter H. Johns, *A History of the University of Alberta, 1908-1969* (Edmonton: The University of Alberta Press, 1981).

university as an institution that develops and operates within the political, economic, and social framework of Canadian society.⁴ Doug Owram's "The Baby Boom and the Transformation of the University of Alberta," for example, looks at social, economical, and political changes that occurred at the University of Alberta through the 1960s. He studies the university's growth in relation to the surrounding area of Edmonton, arguing that after World War Two, the University of Alberta's relationship with the government changed. Owram asserts that in the post-war period, the university became more crucial to Albertan society by providing the education emphasised by employers in the post-war era as well as putting money into the economy through both the jobs it created and the students it trained.⁵

Since the early 1980s, an abundance of works have been written about women's participation in university life.⁶ Initially, histories of women at university, like those of histories of particular institutions, emphasised women's entry into university, the obstacles they faced, their achievements, and their overall progress. For instance, Margaret Gillett's *We Walked Very Warily: A History of Women at McGill* (1981) celebrates women's greatness and their advancements. Her chapter on "The Women's Movement on Campus" concludes that "women have come a long way."⁷ Kate Lamont's

⁴ Maureen Aytenfis, "University of Alberta: Objectives, Structure, and Role in the Community, 1908-1928" (M.A. thesis, University of Alberta, 1982) and Olenka S.E. Bilash, "Decoding the Cultural Landscape: A Structural Analysis of the University of Alberta" (M.A. thesis, University of Alberta, 1984) both examine the effect of outside interference on the university structure. Aytenfis argues that despite pressure from the government, Henry Tory, the first president of the University of Alberta, established its direction and social role. Bilash asserts that the values of the builders and university founders affected the construction of the original university buildings.

⁵ Doug Owram, "The Baby Boom and the Transformation of the University of Alberta," in *Edmonton: The Life of a City*, ed. Bob Hesketh and Frances Swyripa (Edmonton: NeWest Publishers, 1995), 387, 293. Also see Chad Gaffield, Lynne Marks, and Susan Laskin, "Student Populations and Graduate Careers: Queen's University, 1895-1900," in *Youth, University, and Canadian Society*, ed. Paul Axelrod and John Reid (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1989), 3-25; and Paul Axelrod, *Making a Middle Class: Student Life in English Canada During the Thirties* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1990). Both works argue that middle-class work values were perpetuated at university.

⁶ This section will look only at those histories about women students. However, there are many well-written works about women faculty members: Alison Prentice and Marjorie R. Theobald, eds., *Women who Taught: Perspectives on the History of Women and Teaching* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991); Judith Fingard, "Gender and Inequality at Dalhousie: Faculty Women before 1950," *Dalhousie Review* 59, 4 (Winter 1984-85): 687-703; and Alison Prentice, "Laying Siege to the History Professoriate," in *Creating Historical Memory: English-Canadian Women and the Work of History*, ed. Beverly Boutilier and Alison Prentice (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1997), 197-232.

⁷ Margaret Gillett, *"We Walked Very Warily": A History of Women at McGill* (Montreal: Eden Free Women's Publications, 1981), 410.

"We Can Achieve": A History of Women in Sport at the University of Alberta echoes Gillett's monograph, stressing the gains women made in sport at the university and the "great" women who achieved them.⁸ Lamont's study, however, is an exception because by the 1990s, most works in the field of women's history had progressed beyond the study of exceptional women and began to include topics like gender in order to demonstrate the complexity of women's lives, such as how ethnic background affected women's lives and the general women's student body, not just the extraordinary.⁹ For example, Lee Stewart's *"It's Up to You": Women at the University of British Columbia: The Early Years* examines the campaign for home economics, arguing that demands for a field that was perceived as distinctly feminine demonstrates how women often embraced a social role that emphasised their domesticity.¹⁰ Judith Fingard also studies the average female students and asserts in "College, Careers, and Community: Dalhousie Coeds, 1881-1921" that although women developed a separate "female culture" identity, their deliberate isolation from male students did not hinder them at university. Rather, university was a liberating experience for women as it contributed to their independence.¹¹ Nicole Neatby's "Preparing for the Working World: Women at Queen's during the 1920s" has a different approach, arguing that Veronica Strong-Boag's contention that the interwar period "turned back" the clock on the gains women had made during First World War is incorrect.¹² Neatby resolves that these years were in fact a time of change for women in which their expectations grew because higher education led them to expect employment after graduation and to demand higher paying positions.¹³ Stewart, Fingard, and Neatby are all valuable resources as they illustrate how women

⁸ Kate Lamont, *"We Can Achieve": A History of Women in Sport at the University of Alberta* (Edmonton: Academic Printing, 1988).

⁹ Historians are also beginning to discuss ethnicity. See Lynne Marks, "Kale Meydelach or Shulamith Girls: Cultural Change and Continuity Among Jewish Parents and Daughters: A Case Study of Toronto's Harbord Collegiate in the 1920s," in *Gender and Education in Ontario*, ed. Ruby Heap and Alison Prentice (Toronto: Canadian Scholars' Press, 1991), 291-302. Also see Laurie Mook, "Women at University: The Early Years," *Alberta History* 44, 1 (Winter 1996): 8-14. Mook looks at both the first women students and the first women professors at the University of Alberta.

¹⁰ Lee Stewart, *"It's Up to You": Women at the University of British Columbia in the Early Years* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1990), 123, 10.

¹¹ Judith Fingard, "College, Career, and Community: Dalhousie Coeds, 1881-1921," Axelrod and Reid, *Youth, University, and Canadian Society*, 48, 47.

¹² Nicole Neatby, "Preparing for the Working World: Women at Queen's During the 1920s," *Historical Studies in Education* 1, 1 (Spring 1989): 53.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 68.

worked within traditional boundaries to challenge and modify their gender roles at university.

In “Women at the University of Saskatchewan,” Michael Hayden looks at change and continuity, yet rather than seeing a linear progression in women’s acceptance at university, he contends that it was cyclical in nature because, despite recent gains, women “are just getting to where they used to be and there is a very long way to go yet!”¹⁴ For instance, he says the 1907 University Act prohibited discrimination, yet in 1974 the university removed the clause that guaranteed women’s equality.¹⁵ Similarly, while the percentage of women faculty members was at an all time high in the 1930s, by the 1960s and 1970s, these women were retiring and the university did not replace them.¹⁶ Focusing on the University of Alberta, Elaine Chalus looks at progress, arguing although students’ attitudes changed slowly during the 1960s, they were eventually “modified” and illustrating how change was resisted but mostly promoted in the institutions of Wauneita, an organisation to which all women belonged, and the *Gateway*, the student newspaper.¹⁷ Both these articles are useful resources as they show that continuity and change at university can be viewed differently.

Historians who studied post-war period often focus on the 1960s and depict the decade as a time of radicalism. Cyril Levitt’s *Children of Privilege: Student Revolts in the Sixties, A Study of Student Movements in Canada, the United States, and West Germany* contends that the student activist movements of the 1960s were not a revolution of less wealthy students against an elitist university structure but a “revolt of privilege against privilege” as middle-class students rose up against an equally privileged university.¹⁸ Nevertheless, these years changed the face of Canadian universities. Students “revamped the foundations of middle-class life [and] altered the character of sexual norms and mores,” while liberating women and minorities within society.¹⁹

¹⁴ Michael Hayden, “Women at the University of Saskatchewan: Pattern of a Problem,” *Saskatchewan History* 40, 2 (1987): 82.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 72.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ Elaine Chalus, “From Friedan to Feminism: Gender and Change at the University of Alberta, 1960-1970,” in *Standing on New Ground: Women in Alberta*, ed. Catherine Cavanaugh and Randi R. Warne (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1993), 142.

¹⁸ Cyril Levitt, *Children of Privilege: Student Revolts in the Sixties: A Study of Student Movements in Canada, the United States, and West Germany* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984), 4.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 189.

Patricia Jasen in “In Pursuit of Human Values (or Laugh When You Say That)”: The Student Critique of the Arts Curriculum in the 1960s” also examines student movements that demanded that the arts curriculum become more humanistic. Students wanted a curriculum that studied “human values” and the “quality of life in the Western world.”²⁰ Jasen asserts that the student movement was instrumental in pushing the university to adopt Canadian history courses that looked at women, ethnic groups, popular culture, and the working class.²¹

In contrast, fewer historians have looked at the particulars of university life. Nonetheless, Elaine Chalus and Doug Oram are two authors who have explored students and student culture. Oram studies the post-war period in his book, *Born at the Right Time: A History of the Baby-Boom Generation*, and his article, “The Baby Boom and the Transformation of the University of Alberta.” Both works discuss the 1950s, but their main focus is the 1960s. His book details the lives of the baby-boomers, a term applied to children born during the post-war period, and how this generation challenged the status quo by agitating for social change. His article is about the University of Alberta, and although he examines its students, he concentrates on the university as an institution and its role in society.²² Elaine Chalus, however, studies only the period of the 1960s and only women students at the University of Alberta. Their work differs from that of Levitt and Jasen because the women and men in Chalus and Oram’s histories are not the “great” reformists agitating governments for change but the average students.

As I investigate “ordinary” female students, Chalus and Oram’s studies are the most relevant to my thesis. Although there are similarities, my examination explores the period throughout the 1950s to the 1970s in a more comprehensive inquiry of the women undergraduate students at the University of Alberta. As well, my study is less about institutions; Oram focuses on the university, while Chalus centres her discussion on the Wauneita Society and the *Gateway*. I use all three as sources in my work, looking at how the official institutions of the university, Wauneita, and the newspaper created gender in conjunction with women students themselves as these all worked in tandem to form new

²⁰ Patricia Jasen, “‘In Pursuit of Human Values (or Laugh When You Say That)’: The Student Critique of the Arts Curriculum in the 1960s,” in *Youth, University, and Canadian Society*, 247.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 263.

²² Doug Oram, *Born at the Right Time: A History of the Baby-Boom Generation* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996); and Oram, “Baby Boom.”

ideas of womanhood. In addition, unlike previous studies, I incorporated women's own voices and experiences by conducting oral interviews.

Chapter one of this thesis provides the context for the following chapters and briefly introduces Canadian society after the Second World War focusing on its social movements and developments in higher education. Chapter two profiles undergraduate women students at the University of Alberta from 1950 to 1975 by exploring the proportions of women compared to men, their reasons for attending university and the fields in which they enrolled in order to demonstrate that although more women attended university, they remained in traditionally female fields. The third chapter addresses how the university as an institution, students in general, and women students in particular constructed gender attitudes. The fourth and final chapter examines four formal extracurricular activities – Wauneita Society, women's fraternities and sports, and queen contests – and how women and campus society used these institutions to challenge, maintain, and negotiate gender ideals.

This thesis uses a variety of primary sources in order to examine women's students' lives at the University of Alberta. Official written documents like the *Gateway*, university statistics, and the minutes of the Panhellenic Society, an organisation to which all fraternity women belonged and the Wauneita Society, and the records of the Dean of Women have been utilized. The *Gateway*, the official University of Alberta student newspaper, is particularly important because it spanned the entire timeframe of the study, and, unlike most other official sources, it offered a distinctly student view of student life by providing men and women students' voices. However, the written records do not always tell the whole story or they are sometimes biased. For example, the *Gateway* showed an overwhelmingly male view of the University of Alberta, as all but three of twenty editors-in-chiefs in the period between 1950 and 1970 were men. Panhellenic Council are also prejudiced as they usually focused around one particular event in fraternity life – Rush. To complement the *Gateway* and other contemporary written sources, eleven women were interviewed. They came from both rural and urban backgrounds – six came from rural Alberta and the other five from Edmonton – and were of different ethnic origins. While the women interviewed obviously did not represent all the women students who attended the University of Alberta in these three decades, they

will shed light on individual women's experiences and how they perceived them. The interviews were conducted one-on-one using a tape recorder and a questionnaire (See Appendix A). The questions addressed several issues: women's background and their choice of program, their experiences at university such as in their residences and in their courses, their sexuality, their extracurricular activities and political beliefs, and how their university experience affected their post-university life. These interviews supplement my other findings, giving a personal and intimate view into the lives of women at the University of Alberta from the 1950s through the 1970s. Using these sources, I demonstrate that although women's roles experienced change, for the most part, they remained fairly traditional.

Chapter 1

Canadian Society, Women, and Higher Education

“Now we must leave our sanctuary ... we must seek fulfilment in the world beyond ourselves and the university.”¹

While this thesis focuses on women and their construction of gender at the University of Alberta, its discussion must be rooted in the world beyond the “hallowed halls” of learning, as students who entered the university were influenced by social trends in the larger community. Following the Second World War, mainstream Canadian society idealized women’s roles, socialising women to believe that they had to be good wives, perfect mothers, and proper hostesses. By the mid-1960s, women began to oppose the constructed roles and to redefine the feminine ideal. University women simultaneously followed suit and often led the way. Yet while they renegotiated traditional gender roles, they also adhered to them. As a result, ideas about equality became more prevalent in the late 1960s and 1970s, yet most women undergraduates remained in fairly traditional areas, influenced by their own acceptance of traditional gender roles and society’s proscribed ideals.

The Second World War disrupted earlier gender roles. As a large number of Canadian men enlisted and served in the armed forces, women assumed many jobs traditionally reserved for men, including those in heavy industry and the military. In Edmonton, for example, in the fall of 1943, 1000 of 2400 workers at Aircraft Repair were women. Similarly, women also worked as mechanics, meter readers, streetcar conductors, and postal van drivers.² These activities challenged prevailing views about women’s position in the home. Before the war, most people expected that a woman would marry, have children, and find fulfillment with her work inside the home as the primary childcare giver; in contrast, a husband was supposed to be the breadwinner who worked outside the home.³ Magazines like *Chatelaine* drew upon these beliefs, emphasising both marriage and children. Advertisements, for instance, were filled with babies and

¹ Cecil H. Pretty, “Class History,” University of Alberta yearbook, *Evergreen and Gold* (1966), 373.

² Bob Gilmour, “The Homefront in the Second World War,” in *Edmonton: The Life of a City*, ed. Bob Hesketh and Frances Swyripa (Edmonton: NeWest Publishers, 1995), 220.

³ Veronica Strong-Boag, *The New Day Recalled: Lives of Girls and Women in English Canada, 1919-1939* (Toronto: Copp Clark Pitman, 1988), 145, 217.

messages about the importance of babies.⁴ However, not every woman lived up to the social ideal – some women worked outside the home, some could not conceive, and some did not marry – yet the ideal persisted. A “proper” woman was virtuous, physically attractive and feminine looking, cultured, a loving supportive wife and a domestic manager who knew both how to budget her money and keep her house clean.⁵ After the interruption of war, this image was reaffirmed and reinforced. The war had been a period of great social upheaval; consequently, Canadians, and North Americans in general, desired a return to the perceived stability and peace of the pre-war, pre-Depression years. In order to achieve this, women’s roles as wives and mothers were accentuated. Concurrently, returning veterans returned and resumed their pre-war employment, thus pushing women out of their wartime jobs and back into the home. In part, the emergence of the Cold War – an ideological battle between capitalism in the Western world and communism in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) – heightened the idealized gender roles as communism was thought to subvert male and female divisions. In Canada, the threat of communism was highlighted in 1945 when a Russian cipher clerk, Igor Gouzenko, seeking asylum, provided evidence that the Soviets were spying on the Canadian government in Ottawa.⁶ As a result, women’s role in preventing communism was stressed. An ideal North American woman worked within the home in the suburbs, stabilizing the family with her presence and providing for them by buying household goods, thus emphasising to women that capitalism – through their consumerism – would defeat communism.⁷ Russian women were seen as a direct contrast to Canadian and North American women because they were expected to work outside the home. As well, it was believed that Russian women desexualised themselves through their work and political activism (their adherence to communism), while North American women accentuated their femininity through their personal grooming and role

⁴ Ibid., 151.

⁵ Alison Prentice et al., *Canadian Women: A History* (Toronto: Harcourt Brace Canada, 1996), 289-291; and Strong-Boag, *New Day Recalled*, 126-127.

⁶ D.N. Sprague, *Post-Confederation Canada: The Structure of Canadian History Since 1867* (Scarborough: Prentice-Hall Canada, 1990), 242.

⁷ Veronica Strong-Boag, “Home Dreams: Women and the Suburban Experiment in Canada, 1945-1960,” *Canadian Historical Review* 72, 4 (1991): 474.

as housewives.⁸ After the war, Canadian society attempted to rebuild a stable, peaceful society and to hold communism at bay by emphasising the home and family and women's role within these. Increased rates of marriage, coupled with high birthrates, led to the rise of the suburbia. In turn, suburbia helped to establish gender division by its physical separation of men and women and its emphasis on domesticity.

These ideas were reflected in the social and demographic trends following the war. Men and women married at younger ages and tended to have more children; therefore, women had increasingly more responsibilities in the home.⁹ Marriage rates soared. In 1937, 7.9 per thousand married; at the end of the war in 1946, 10.9 per thousand married, and although it declined in the 1950s, it still remained high, only dropping to pre-war levels to 7.7 in 1958.¹⁰ As the marriage rates increased, age at first marriage decreased from 27.6 in 1941 to 24.9 in 1971 for men and 24.4 to 22.6 for women.¹¹ Similarly, birthrates swelled as more people married. In 1937, 20.1 babies were born per 1000 women, the rate rose to 24.3 in 1945, and by 1947, it had reached a high of 28.9. Between 1953 and 1957, the birthrate remained in the 28.0 range.¹² These figures began to decline in the 1960s, and in 1971, the birthrate was 16.8 per 1000 women.¹³ Suburbs also accentuated women's domestic roles as they physically separated the sexes; middle-class women's lives in particular revolved around the fringes of the city since that was where they lived and worked, while many of their husbands worked outside the home and closer to the city core.¹⁴ In Edmonton, suburbs flourished. For example, areas like Woodcroft and Inglewood that had been subdivided in the 1910s and then abandoned after Edmonton's real estate market collapsed in 1914 were suddenly

⁸ Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era* (New York: Basic Books, 1988), 16-19.

⁹ Strong-Boag, "Home Dreams," 483, 473.

¹⁰ F. H. Leacy, ed., "Number of Marriages and Rate, Average Age at Marriage for Brides and Bridegrooms, Number of Divorces and Rate, Net Family Formation, Canada, 1921 to 1974," *Historical Statistics of Canada*, 2nd ed. (Ottawa: Statistics Canada, 1983), Series B75-81.

¹¹ Prentice, *Canadian Women*, 380; Similar rates in the United States, combined with a society which promoted the ideal woman as a mother and wife, caused Betty Friedan to assert that "[i]n the 1950s, ... [women] ... showed no signs of wanting to be anything more than suburban housewives and mothers"; Betty Friedan, *Feminine Mystique* (New York: Dell Publishing, 1963), 142.

¹² Birthrates refer to the number of live births per 1000 women between the ages of 15 and 49. Lyle E. Lawson, *The Canadian Family in Comparative Perspective* (Scarborough, Ontario: Prentice-Hall of Canada, 1976), 103.

¹³ These numbers are the number of live births per thousand population, excluding the Yukon Territory and the Northwest Territories. Prentice, *Canadian Women*, 380.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 471.

redeveloped, while new ones, like Crestwood were planned.¹⁵ The suburbs standardised look also reinforced women's domestic role as women as homemakers were expected to display their household skills by bringing "uniqueness" to their house through decoration and design. Magazines like *Chatelaine* reinforced women's domesticity by providing them with ideas to help personalize their space.¹⁶ *Chatelaine* even featured a "Mrs. Chatelaine" contest in which women had to send copies of their floor plans and furniture arrangements.¹⁷

Not only did married women have gender roles that they were expected to fulfill, but unmarried young women were expected to think and behave in certain ways. Throughout the 1950s, young women were inundated with the idea that sex was only supposed to occur in marriage. This "cult of virginity" that developed praised chastity and condemned women who went "all the way" by calling them "tramps."¹⁸ Consequently, young men understood that to marry a woman who had been intimate with another man was a loss of honour.¹⁹ Yet, paradoxically, young people were expected and encouraged to practise petting and kissing. According to historian Doug Oram even some of the more liberal churches believed that a certain amount of sexual behaviour, such as petting or kissing, before marriage was acceptable.²⁰ Dating in the 1950s also shaped male and female behaviours to emphasise "proper" gender roles. Opening doors for women encouraged men to act like "gentlemen" and women to act like "ladies," while "going steady" emulated the permanence of marriage.²¹ The period of the 1950s and the early 1960s was thus filled with apparent contradictions. Women's roles as wives and mothers were idealized, yet few women could live up to the ideal, and sexual intercourse was vilified but dating and intimacies other than sex were not.

¹⁵ Lori Yanish and Shirley Lowe, *Edmonton's West Side Story: The History of the Original West End of Edmonton from 1870* (Edmonton: 124 Street and Area Business Association, 1991), 34, 134.

¹⁶ Strong-Boag, "Home Dreams," 492.

¹⁷ Valerie J. Korinek, "'Mrs. Chatelaine' vs. 'Mrs. Slob': Contestants, Correspondents, and the *Chatelaine* Community in Action, 1961-1969," *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association* 7 (1996): 251. Also see her *Roughing It in the Suburbs: Reading Chatelaine Magazine in the Fifties and Sixties* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000).

¹⁸ Doug Oram, *Born at the Right Time: A History of the Baby-Boom Generation* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 257-258.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 257.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 258.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 147.

Nonetheless, women began to reject the image in the early 1960s as some women became dissatisfied with their idealized role as homemaker. These women felt isolated by their suburban existence and wanted more from life than to be a perfect wife and mother, and others objected to the role because it was not their reality.²² In Canada, reactions to the *Chatelaine* contest “Mrs. Chatelaine” demonstrated women’s growing frustration. Although all Canadian homemakers were eligible to participate, not every woman met the contest’s criteria. The entry form was labour intensive as candidates had to send in photos of themselves, along with statistics about their height, weight, eye colour, and age, as well as information as to their husband’s occupation and income and the number and ages of their children. Women also needed to include descriptions of their house-cleaning and entertaining schedules, hobbies, projects, menus, floor plans and furniture arrangements. By providing a profile of their lives and giving personal statistics, the participants had to prove that they fit the ideal of the physically attractive, gracious, middle-class housewife. Few women fit this mould: women who worked, who were not married, who were not mothers, or who were lesbians were ineligible to participate because of the contest’s parameters.²³ In reaction, some women challenged the ideal, arguing that they were in fact a “Mrs. Slob” – a woman who was not a “perfect housekeeper, a faultless mother, [or] a charming hostess.”²⁴

Moreover, male and female divisions were nothing more than an ideal since more women were working in positions outside the home after the Second World War than ever before. From 1931 to 1971, the proportion of married women working rose significantly from 3.5 per cent to 37.0 per cent, while the figure for single women rose from 43.8 per cent to 53.5 per cent in the same period.²⁵ Mary Kinnear’s study of university women in Manitoba shows that the proportion of registered nurses who were married rose in the post-war period from 11.0 per cent in 1946 to 64.0 percent in 1971.²⁶ Women, however, continued to be relegated to a “pink ghetto,” meaning that they were

²² Strong-Boag, “Home Dreams,” 503-504.

²³ Korinek, “Mrs. Chatelaine,” 251, 252.

²⁴ Ibid., 267.

²⁵ Susan A. MacDaniel, “The Changing Canadian Family: Women’s Roles and the Impact of Feminism,” in *Changing Patterns: Women in Canada*, 2nd ed., ed. Sandra Burt, Lorraine Code, and Lindsay Dorney (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1988), 109.

²⁶ Mary Kinnear, *In Subordination: Professional Women, 1870-1970* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1995), 115.

pushed into traditionally female occupations like stenographical or secretarial work that generally received lower pay.²⁷ Even in the professions, women worked as subordinates. For instance, women were more often nurses and teachers than physicians and principals.²⁸ After the war, mainstream Canadian society reinforced gender roles, yet while aspects of these roles such as premarital chastity for women were internalized, for the most part the ideals remained nothing more than ideals as few women could achieve them. However, even those women who worked were subjected to the idea of the “proper” woman as they were expected to take jobs in fields that seemed to compliment their feminine skills. As a result, women began to agitate for change, demanding equality, both in jobs and in pay.

The war had also affected post-secondary education in Canada as many male students left university and others delayed their studies in order to enlist. After the war, post-secondary education in Canada expanded as veterans returned home and resumed or began their education, motivated in part by the government’s initiative to pay for their training.²⁹ By the early 1950s, the number of veterans going to university decreased. However, several other factors – a prosperous economy, technological advancements, social attitudes, and later the “baby boom” – resulted in increased university enrolments. Alberta was a particularly wealthy province in the post-war era; the discovery of oil in Leduc in 1947 created a primary based industrial economy, which was, especially in Edmonton, prosperous. A more affluent society encouraged Albertans to move to the cities seeking employment and education, resulting in great urbanization.³⁰ Edmonton, for instance, grew from over 100,000 in 1946 to over 400,000 in 1971.³¹ The increased number of people in the city resulted in a need for more government and government services, thus more jobs for civil servants were created. In addition, the increased population also led to a greater demand for more physicians, nurses, teachers, and bankers as well as other white-collar occupations.³² Secondly, the Cold War period left

²⁷ Heather McIvor, *Women and Politics in Canada* (Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press, 1996), 96-97, 111.

²⁸ Kinnear, *In Subordination*, 150.

²⁹ Howard Palmer and Tamara Palmer, *Alberta: A New History* (Edmonton: Hurtig Publishers, 1990), 299.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 299, 300.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 306.

³² Doug Owram, “The Baby Boom and the Transformation of the University of Alberta,” Hesketh and Swyripa, *Edmonton: The Life of A City*, 285.

the North American world scrambling to develop faster than the Soviet Union. When the Soviet Union won the race to space by launching Sputnik in 1957, Western countries, such as Canada and the United States became even more anxious to compete with the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. To do so, however, required trained professionals like engineers and scientists, individuals which the university, including the University of Alberta, could provide.³³

Since parents were generally more affluent in the 1950s, 1960s and early 1970s and more jobs required higher education, more parents sent their children to high school and then university.³⁴ Parents had higher expectations as well, wanting their children to achieve a standard of living equal to or above their own.³⁵ By 1954, over fifty per cent of Canadian students went on to high school.³⁶ As more young people gained the necessary matriculation requirements, more of them entered university programs. In 1951, only 2 per cent of eighteen- to twenty-four-year-olds went to university, but by the late 1960s, the percentage of young people going on to university had increased to 17 per cent. Alberta, extremely prosperous during this period due to the discovery of oil, had the highest national attendance rate of 20 per cent.³⁷ Moreover, the “baby boom,” as the high birthrates in the post-war period came to be known, provided much of the population for universities in the mid- to late 1960s.

These changes led to more women attending university since parents could more readily send all of the children, including daughters, to university. Before the prosperity of the post-war era, women were not always allowed to continue their education because many parent believed that it was not necessary for a wife and mother to have higher education and that if they had the money, they would rather send their sons who would use the degree more readily.³⁸ According to sociologists Jill McCalla Vickers and June Adam in their 1977 study on the status of women, this had not changed by the 1970s, as few women students came from “deprived backgrounds,” suggesting that only those

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Owram, *Born at the Right Time*, 179.

³⁵ Paul Axelrod, “Student Life in Canadian Universities: The Lessons of History,” *Canadian Journal of Higher Education* 20, 3 (1990): 20.

³⁶ Owram, “Baby Boom,” 288.

³⁷ Ibid., 288, 287.

³⁸ Owram, *Born at the Right Time*, 274.

parents who could afford to would send their daughter to university.³⁹ The proportion of female students to male students had remained fairly consistent from 1925 to 1955, but from 1960 to 1975, it grew quickly, increasing from 24.8 per cent in 1960 to 42.4 per cent in 1970. The changes were significant as women went from being less than one-third of all students in 1950 to nearly one-half by 1975.

Table 1-1: Full-time University Undergraduate Enrolment, By Sex, Canada, Selected Years, 1925-75⁴⁰

Year	Male	Female	Total	% Female
1925	19580	5272	24851	21.2
1930	24148	7428	31579	23.5
1935	26028	7494	33522	22.4
1940	26710	8107	34817	23.3
1945	48991	12870	61861	20.8
1950	50170	13866	64036	21.7
1955	54545	14765	69310	21.3
1960	80582	26629	107211	24.8
1965	125859	61190	187049	32.7
1970	174945	101352	276297	36.7
1975	190696	140258	330954	42.4

Throughout the early and mid-1900s, many people attributed women's attendance at university as a step towards the MRS degree – the idea that women came to university to find a husband. How accurate was this image? Historian Michael Hayden suggests that from the 1920s through the 1960s “getting a husband seems to have been the motivation of a significant number of female university students” for going to university.⁴¹ Other than this statement, Hayden, however, does not address the issue in his case study of women at the University of Saskatchewan. Contemporary sources also suggested that the MRS degree motivated at least some women. In 1952, the author of the article “Mrs. Degrees?” in the *Gateway*, the University of Alberta student newspaper,

³⁹ Jill McCalla Vickers and June Adam, *“But Can You Type?” Canadian Universities and the Status of Women* (Toronto: Clarke, Irwin & Company, 1977), 30. Similarly, historian Paul Axelrod suggests that most students, male and female, came from modest to comfortable backgrounds; youths from the working class and poorer families were under-represented at university. Axelrod, “Student Life,” 20.

⁴⁰ Data in graph taken from “Full-time University Undergraduate Enrolment, by Field of Specialization and Sex, Canada, Selected Years, 1861-1975,” *Historical Statistics of Canada*, ed. F. H. Leacy, Series W439-455.

⁴¹ Michael Hayden, “Women at the University of Saskatchewan: Pattern of a Problem,” *Saskatchewan History* 40, 2 (1987): 74.

claimed that even though 85 per cent of female Arts students professed to come to university for a career rather than a marriage certificate, their declaration was a “clever” lie. Rather, the author asserted that women were ambitious and worked harder “for [their] MRS degree than for anything else ... [a]s that is [their] ultimate goal in life.”⁴² Vickers and Adam concurred in 1977, maintaining that women “probably continue[d] to see the MRS degree ... as a B.A. [Bachelor of Arts] or more rarely a B.Sc. [Bachelor of Science]” as education was not undertaken for a career, but rather as a “contingency plan” in case anything happened to their marriage.⁴³ My interviewee, Mary*, a student at the University of Alberta during the late 1950s and early 1960s, remembers:

I was a small town girl. It [marriage] was something that I wanted to do, but I wasn't out there recruiting. I guess in those days that was an expectation. I did have a nursing student that was with me who said that she was at university to catch a man.⁴⁴

However, there must be a deeper investigation into the reasons why women came to university and remained in programs or disciplines that were traditionally female. Marriage was a social expectation for women and the university atmosphere created an environment in which men and women readily met. Consequently, dances, other extracurricular activities, and sharing classes together at universities ensured that men and women met, interacted, dated, and in some cases, married. In fact, while many of my interviewees married their university sweethearts, they all claimed that while they had expected to marry eventually, they had not gone to university in order to meet a husband. One interviewee, who met her husband while at university, had begun her studies with the intention never to marry.⁴⁵ Helen H., a student in the 1970s, recalls that she had once had a friend who had gone for “the MRS degree and she got married in her fourth year – they're still married,” but then she stopped herself, adding “no I can't say ... it [was] the MRS degree, there was a lot there for it and she succeeded.”⁴⁶ In other words, marriage was encouraged by society, and the university provided the perfect place to meet a man. Lynn (1966-71) reminisces how expectations regarding marriage were constantly present:

I didn't enter university until I was 21 ... you know, I was a lot older and more experienced. By then my classmates – a lot of them were married. One of them had a

⁴² “Mrs. Degrees?” *Gateway*, 1 February 1952.

⁴³ Vickers, “*But Can You Type*,” 31.

⁴⁴ Mary* is a pseudonym. Mary*, interview by author, tape recording, Edmonton, Alberta, 6 March 2001.

⁴⁵ Robin, interview by author, tape recording, Edmonton, Alberta, 9 February 2001.

⁴⁶ Helen H., interview by author, tape recording, Edmonton, Alberta, 29 March 2001.

baby ... I thought [marriage] was a good thing. I was very positive about marriage ... I wanted to get married.⁴⁷

Thus the idea of the MRS degree is somewhat deceptive as women were socialised to marry and university provided an arena in which males and females could easily meet. Yet, at the same time, women were almost condemned for marrying at university because when they did, it was seen as though women had only come to university for a husband and wasted their degree.

By the mid-1960s, the increased number of women attending university also helped to incite social change. More women were better educated than ever before and had higher expectations about their social roles.⁴⁸ Consequently, both women in general and women students in particular began to demand a re-evaluation of the social ideology that put housewives and mothers on a pedestal and pressured women to conform to this ideal. Women were no longer content to accept a subordinate role in the public or private sphere and demanded equality with men. The women's movement of the 1960s had two strains: the initial second-wave women's movement⁴⁹ and then later the women's liberation.⁵⁰ Throughout the 1900s, women had been involved in women's groups, auxiliary political parties and unions, and after gaining the vote in the late 1910s, they became active in provincial and federal political parties. The discontent of older married middle-class women with their social role led to the resurgence of feminism in the 1960s

⁴⁷ Lynn, interview by author, tape recording, Edmonton, Alberta, 13 February 2001.

⁴⁸ Owram, *Born at the Right Time*, 274.

⁴⁹ First-wave feminism refers to the women's movement that occurred in the early part of the 1900s as upper-middle class, usually married and older women demanded the vote so that they could reform society. Second-wave feminism was the revival of feminism in the 1960s and 1970s. Prentice, *Canadian Women*, 224, 414..

⁵⁰ See Micheline Dumont, "The Origins of the Women's Movement in Quebec," in *Rethinking Canada: The Promise of Women's History*, 3rd ed., ed. Veronica Strong-Boag and Anita Clair Fellman (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1997), 462-475, which demonstrates that the women's movement in English Canada and Quebec cannot always be viewed together. Also see Naomi Black, "The Canadian Women's Movement: The Second Wave," Burt, Code, and Dorney, *Changing Patterns*, 151-176 for a discussion about the causes and consequences of the women's movement and Sandra Burt, "The Changing Patterns of Public Policy," Burt, Code, and Dorney, *Changing Patterns*, 212-242, examine the disparity between legislation and women's reality, arguing that the former was shaped by patriarchy. Ruth Roach Pierson et al. eds., *Canadian Women's Issues*, vol. 1 of *Strong Voices: Twenty-Five Years of Women's Activism in English Canada* (Toronto: James Lorimer, 1993) provides a collection of articles about women's issues such as women and law and about the women's movement. Constance Backhouse and David H. Flaherty, eds., *Challenging Times: The Women's Movement in Canada and the United States* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1992) is a volume that examines the similarities and differences of the women's movement in Canada and the United States.

and the formation of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women (RCSW) in 1967. The RCSW was the result of numerous women's groups lobbying the government for change as women wanted equality with men. For example, although women participated in politics, few were ever elected; likewise, while women's social roles had been transformed in the post-war period as more women worked, attitudes did not change.⁵¹ In order to fulfill its mandate, the RCSW interviewed women's groups across the country and also sent questionnaires to Canadian universities. For instance, at the University of Alberta, the Dean of Women became the voice for women at the university as she detailed women's orientation at the university, extracurricular activities, residences, and service projects for the RCSW.⁵² After studying women's health and education and family law (though only incorporating the views of middle-class women, not Native or non-middle-class or immigrant), the RCSW reported in 1970 that women should be able to choose whether or not they worked outside the home, that fathers and society should share in the upbringing of a child, that maternity should garner special treatment, and that discriminatory practices existed.⁵³

The women's liberation movement emerged from the international student movement. In the 1960s, university students rebelled against adult society, creating a "counter-culture" which questioned adult authority and demanded the liberation of colonized people such as Natives, African Canadians, Vietnamese from the American led Vietnam war, and Quebecois from the Anglo-dominated Canadian society. Women university students also agitated for women's liberation from the male domination and prejudice.⁵⁴ On campuses throughout Canada, women formed organisations devoted to their cause. At the University of Toronto, women protested against male chauvinism in the New Left Committee (a radical student organisation which argued for greater student power and representation in the university) and formed one of the first women's

⁵¹ Influential in the formation of the RCSW, Laura Sabia helped to motivate the activism of women's groups across Canada. In an effort to get the federal government to react to their concerns, Sabia threatened that if they did nothing three million women would march on Ottawa. Although her threat was a bluff, it worked and the government appointed the Royal Commission on the Status of Women to investigate women's complaints. Prentice, *Canadian Women*, 416-418.

⁵² Records of the Office of the Dean of Women, Report of the Dean of Women to the Royal Commission for the Status of Women, 1968, University of Alberta Archives (UAA), Edmonton, Alberta, Acc. 70-168-67.

⁵³ Prentice, *Canadian Women*, 418.

⁵⁴ Owrarn, *Born at the Right Time*, 217; and Prentice, *Canadian Women*, 421.

liberation groups in North America, and at Simon Fraser University women created a Women's Caucus that in 1968, before it was legalized, offered abortion counselling and referral.⁵⁵ As well, part of the movement was the liberation of women's sexuality. In order to achieve greater sexual freedom, women demanded access to birth control methods such as the Pill, an oral birth control method, so that they could have sexual intercourse without worrying about becoming pregnant. Concurrently, women insisted that the Canadian government legalize abortion, making it easier for women to end unwanted pregnancies. However, unlike contraceptives, abortion still remained, in some contexts, an offence under the Criminal Code.⁵⁶

The Second World War had pressed more Canadian women into the workforce than ever before in the twentieth century, yet once the war ended and the men returned, women once again were expected to resume their traditional roles of wives and mothers. As the gap between the ideal and the reality widened, women wanted more. University women students, more often better educated than their mothers and motivated by their families' and their own expectations, demanded that their social role be changed.

Table 1-2: Fields of Study by Year and Percentage of Women in the Faculty at Canadian Universities⁵⁷

Faculty	1945	1971	Increase
Arts and Sciences	26.0%	40.6%	14.6%
Commerce	8.9%	13.9%	5.0%
Dentistry	1.2%	7.5%	6.3%
Education	48.0%	55.8%	7.8%
Engineering	0.6%	2.4%	1.8%
Fine Arts	80.6%	53.9%	(26.7%)
Health Sciences	100.0 %	72.7%	(27.3%)
Household Sciences	100.0%	98.9%	(1.1%)
Law	4.4%	14.9%	10.5%
Medicine	7.3%	20.3%	13.0%
Nursing	100.0%	97.9%	(2.1%)
Pharmacy	25.9%	52.5%	26.6%
Religion/Theology	2.4%	28.7%	26.3%

⁵⁵ Prentice, *Canadian Women*, 421.

⁵⁶ Women formed groups such as the Canadian Association for the Repeal of the Abortion Laws (later the Canadian Abortion Rights Action League) to protest the laws. The laws remained: abortions could only be performed by a qualified physician and in a hospital that had been approved by the Therapeutic Abortion Committee (TAC). Dr. Henry Morgentaler is famous for his defiance as he was arrested and tried by four different juries but in each instance was found not guilty. Prentice, *Canadian Women*, 422, 427.

⁵⁷ Table based upon Table A.8. "Female Enrolment as Percentage of Full-time University Undergraduate Enrolment Selected Fields of Specialization, 1881-1991," in Prentice, *Canadian Women*, 476.

Although the preceding chart demonstrates that women and men entered non-traditional faculties in higher numbers, it also indicates that most students continued to study in traditional areas. The proportions of women in non-traditional fields like theology and pharmacy increased, while less women enrolled in faculties such as dentistry, medicine, and engineering. For instance, by 1971, women in dentistry made up less than 10 per cent of students in the field and less than 3 per cent in engineering.

Before the Second World War and after, women were guided by social expectations into areas that would not conflict with men but be beneficial for them. An arts degree helped women prepare to be housewives or secretaries who would “nurture male creativity, authority, and independence.”⁵⁸ For example, mainstream society thought that an arts degree would help make the home happier, as women who “learned self-control and human nature” from their arts program were better wives and mothers.⁵⁹ In turn, Household Science was supposed to teach women domestic standards and scientific procedures for keeping house.⁶⁰ Nursing maintained the male and female hierarchy since nurses were subordinate to physicians who were most often male. Plus, it played upon the stereotypes that women were said to be endowed with virtues such as nurturance, patience, and obedience.⁶¹ Teaching, like nursing, encouraged women’s maternal instincts as women were seen to be the natural caregivers and teachers of children.⁶² Many women internalized these social expectations. A mid-1960s American study by Alice Rossi revealed the reasons why so few women took sciences: fifty-four per cent of women surveyed said that it was too difficult to combine work with a family; thirty-eight per cent only wanted to work part time; twenty-three per cent thought that a female scientist was unfeminine; and 6 per cent felt that their skills were inadequate.⁶³ However, equally influential in a woman’s choice of study was that mainstream Canadian society expected women to marry and become mothers and to take posts that emphasised their domestic qualities. In her report to the Royal Commission for the Status of Women in 1968, Dean Sparling detailed the discrimination that women encountered in the

⁵⁸ Strong-Boag, *New Day Recalled*, 18.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 24-25.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 20.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 65.

⁶² Kinnear, *In Subordination*, 144.

⁶³ Londa Schiebinger, *Has Feminism Changed Science?* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1999), 99.

workforce as many women were encouraged to take unsatisfactory jobs. Women with a Bachelor of Arts (BA) degree, for instance, often had difficulty finding employment and resigned themselves to accepting positions at the sub-professional level. As well, although few women had problems finding employment in general law practices, criminal and corporate law continued to discriminate against women; female physicians readily found work but were excluded from surgery; commerce graduates discovered that businesses preferred men; and women in engineering, agriculture, and veterinarian science experienced difficulty finding positions since employers often favoured male candidates.⁶⁴ Graduates from the University of Manitoba faced comparable prejudice. One woman whom Mary Kinnear interviewed remembered that when she was articling in 1951, the law firm for which she worked had hired her only for her “typing skills.”⁶⁵ In the 1970s, female university professors still experienced problems: they were paid less than their male counterparts, and while documents sent to male professors were addressed to “professor,” those sent to female professors were labelled “Mrs.”⁶⁶

Social norms of maternity and marriage influenced women’s careers and their university choices. Professions such as surgery, certain fields of law, engineering, and sciences were not seen to complement women’s roles of wives and mothers so that in these areas women found few employment opportunities. In law, firms were reluctant to hire female lawyers, fearing that they would marry and quit once they became pregnant.⁶⁷ Women in “traditional” work such as nursing and education found it easier to balance a career with marriage as their jobs did not challenge ideals of marriage and motherhood. For example, despite its lack of pensions, low pay, and long hours, nursing offered women flexible hours and greater employment opportunities, which they could work around marriage and motherhood.⁶⁸ In more traditional positions, women could work and have a home life, and those positions such as nursing and education were socially acceptable as they complemented women’s maternal role. Between 1950 and 1975, women’s lives changed; more women worked outside the home and more were better educated. Realising that the ideal woman was nothing but a pedestal and wanting more,

⁶⁴ Dean of Women, Report to the Royal Commission for the Status of Women.

⁶⁵ Kinnear, *In Subordination*, 84-85.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 46, 51.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 85.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 116.

women, including university students, agitated for change. Birth control and abortion became more readily available and there was an increased awareness of gender inequalities, which had resulted in women being pushed into less well paid, subordinate employment. University women were often at the forefront in leading this social movement. Yet at the same time as women were refashioning their gender roles and challenging stereotypes in the work place, their own expectations and desires for the social ideal of motherhood and marriage encouraged many to remain in traditional female fields.

Women undergraduate students at the University of Alberta were no different from those of their counterparts throughout Canada. They too argued for women's liberation while also maintaining traditional values. Thus the university can serve as a case study of how women's choices, attitudes, and extracurricular organisations and activities negotiated the traditional roles of women during the period of 1950 to 1975.

Chapter 2

Women Undergraduate Students at the University of Alberta, A Profile

When I became engaged and then married, I still wanted to have a career, but I was not willing to pursue a career in science because it was so time demanding. I found in my third year I was spending so much time at the lab, you know, I'd often be in the lab 'til 10 o'clock at night and this was starting with 8 o'clock classes. And I mean you could, by that time, you could have spent around the clock in the lab and the only way to get ahead was to keep on doing this. And I was unwilling to do that. There was a point in my life when I realised that I can't have marriage and a family and a science career at the same time. I remember, during our courting times, and, oh gee, poor Marshall would spend hours waiting for me in the lab or out in the hallways until I was through with whatever I was working up at the time. By the time I was out of the lab it would be too late to go to a movie or whatever because this is how it went. And after awhile it got to be a grind.¹

Lorraine went to the University of Alberta with a specific goal – to get a degree in chemistry. She achieved her aim yet she did not pursue a career in chemistry; she went back to school and took an after-degree in education. Why? Because along the way life intervened. In the early to mid-1960s, when Lorraine began her degree, chemistry was not a career for women who wanted to have a family and a life. How does Lorraine compare to other students attending the University of Alberta? Who were the women undergraduate students, what were their motivations for attending university, how did they afford it, and what degrees did they take, and why? Between 1950 and 1975, similar demographic changes occurred at the University of Alberta and universities throughout North America: the total number of students grew, as did the number of women and ethnic minorities attending university. However, despite the increased proportions of women at university, many women university students did not always confront the status quo. Rather, throughout the period, they continued to enrol in high numbers in perceived “traditional” female fields such as nursing and teaching. Social perceptions about women's place in society, the cost of education, women's own wants and desires, and their attitudes about women's roles influenced women's choices and the degrees that they took while attending university.

After the Second World War, full-time undergraduate students' attendance increased at the University of Alberta as did the proportion of full-time undergraduate

¹ Lorraine, interview by author, tape recording, Two Hills, Alberta, 2 April 2001.

women students and those of non-British descent. The following chart illustrates the changing male and female enrolment figures at the University of Alberta from 1950-51 to 1977-78 and shows that the proportion of female students grew from 33.2 per cent to 45.5 per cent during this period.

Table 2-1: Full-Time Undergraduate Winter Sessions Students at the University of Alberta, 1950-51 to 1971-72, By Sex²

	Male	Female	Total	%Female
1950-51	2380	1185	3565	33.2%
1951-52	2093	1131	3224	35.1%
1952-53	2115	1236	3351	36.9%
1953-54	2295	1287	3582	35.9%
1955-56	2625	1305	3931	33.2%
1958-59	3795	1989	5784	34.4%
1960-61	4225	2156	6381	33.8%
1962-63	4498	2243	6741	33.3%
1965-66	5691	3417	9108	37.5%
1967-68	6928	4550	11478	39.6%
1968-69	8020	5456	13476	40.5%
1970-71	9648	6531	16179	40.4%
1971-72	9744	6408	16152	39.7%
1972-73	9508	6245	15753	39.6%
1973-74	9894	6763	16657	40.6%
1974-75	10087	7218	17305	41.7%
1975-76	10214	7610	17824	42.7%
1977-78	9509	7952	17461	45.5%

These shifts reflected the changing dynamics of Albertan society. The post-war oil boom in Alberta resulted in a prosperous society. More parents, including immigrant parents, could afford to send their daughters to university. In 1957, there were approximately “two men to every woman on campus,”³ yet by 1967, almost 40 per cent of all students were women, reducing the ratio to almost one man to every one woman.⁴ Changes also

² Based on Nim Mehra, *Enrollment [sic] Patterns and Academic Performance of Women Students at the University of Alberta: A Summary Report* (Edmonton: University of Alberta, 1978), 9-10; and Board of Governors of the University of Alberta, *Report of the Governors, 1950-1975*.

³ “Female Students Outnumbered 2-1,” *Gateway*, 8 November 1957, 7.

⁴ The University of Alberta’s statistics do not differ greatly than national statistics. By the late 1970s, women made up 37 per cent of the Canadian university full-time undergraduate population. Alison Prentice et al., *Canadian Women: A History* (Toronto: Harcourt Brace Canada, 1996), 397.

occurred in the ethnic make-up of the university's campus. Between 1950 and 1975, the proportions of graduating female students with British surnames declined; in contrast, those with non-British surnames increased significantly over the same period.

Table 2-2: Ethnic Background of Surnames, Graduating Female Undergraduate Students at the University of Alberta, 1951-1970⁵

	1951		1956		1961		1966		1970	
Ethnicity	Number	% of total	Number	% of total	Number	% of total	Number	% of total	Number	% of total
British	132	62.3	182	65.2	248	58.8	222	60.5	481	50.2
French	9	4.3	8	2.9	26	6.2	12	3.3	64	6.7
E. Europe	25	11.8	31	11.1	59	14.0	38	10.4	146	15.2
N. Europe	32	15.1	43	15.4	51	12.1	77	21.0	181	18.9
Chinese	1	0.5	0	0	3	0.7	1	0.3	8	0.8
Japanese	2	0.9	1	0.4	3	0.7	4	1.1	6	0.6
Italian	2	0.9	2	0.7	2	0.5	3	0.8	12	1.3
Other	1	0.5	0	0	4	0.7	3	0.8	7	0.7
Unknown	8	3.8	12	4.3	27	6.4	7	1.9	53	5.5
Total	212	100.1	279	100.0	422	100.1	367	100.1	958	99.9

The above chart is not a precise measurement of ethnic background; it is an estimation based on interpretation of the surnames of graduating undergraduate women from the period between 1950 and 1970. The chart, however, illustrates that while the majority of students were of British descent, a significant number proportion were of continental northern European and eastern European origin, as well, into the 1960s and 1970s, women with Chinese, Japanese, and Italian surnames also began to attend the university in greater numbers.⁶

Secondary support for my supposition is seen in the increased number of foreign students over the period. From 1950 to 1976, more students began attending the university from a variety of countries. The following chart does not even approach a definitive list of the multitude of home addresses given in the university records as more students from such places as Hong Kong and India began to attend the university. Concurrently, it also demonstrates the difficulty in determining ethnic origin. Most

⁵ Based on the University of Alberta yearbook, *Evergreen and Gold* (1951, 1956, 1961, 1966, 1970) to estimate the ethnic origin of surnames for female undergraduate graduating students.

⁶ *Evergreen and Gold* (1951, 1956, 1961, 1966, 1970).

students came from Edmonton, Calgary, and other points in Alberta. The university, to compile statistics, used home address and birthplace, which demonstrates only recent immigrants and foreign students, and does not account for second or third-generation Canadians living in Edmonton and Alberta.

Table 2-3: Home Address of Full-time Students, 1950-1976⁷

Home Address	1950-51	% Total	1958-59	% Total	1960-61	% Total	1965-66	% Total	1970-71	% Total	1975-76	% Total
Edmonton	1373	36.81	2149	39.34	2828	42.59	4932	48.20	10670	58.19	11079	56.20
Calgary	467	12.52	430	7.87	430	6.48	584	5.71	682	3.72	1169	5.93
Alberta (Total) ⁸	3481	93.33	4932	90.29	6018	90.63	9139	89.31	16340	89.11	17216	87.32
Canada ⁹	238	6.38	439	8.04	439	6.61	654	6.39	1123	6.12	1487	7.54
Britain and Colonies	2	0.05			79	1.19	53 ¹⁰	0.52	26 ¹¹	0.14	67 ¹²	0.34
United States	2	0.05	18	0.33	25	0.38	80	0.78	108	0.59	130	0.66
Other Specified	3	0.08	82	1.50	49	0.74	307	3.00	739	4.03	815	4.13
Not Specified	4	0.11	22	0.40	30	0.45						
Total	3730	100.0	5462	100.57	6640	100.0	10233	100.0	18336	99.99	19715	99.99

Another marker of change in the university's ethnic make-up is seen in the proliferation of ethnic and religious clubs after the Second World War. Some clubs like the Newman Club (established in 1938), which promoted Catholicism, and Le Cercle Français, (established in 1939), which promoted the study of the French language and culture, were organised before or during the war.¹³ The majority of ethnically diverse organisations formed in the post-war period. The Hillel Club for Jewish students was established in 1948, for example, while others like the Ilarion Club for Greek Orthodox students and the Canterbury Club for Anglicans appear in *Evergreen and Gold* yearbooks only after 1950.¹⁴ These clubs continued to function throughout the 1950s, and by the early 1960s, more clubs appeared that were dedicated to a specific religious or ethnic

⁷ Home address before 1965-66 did not differentiate between countries. Statistics taken from Board of Governors of the University of Alberta, *Report of the Governors*, 1950-51 and 1958-59; and Office of the Registrar, *Summary of Statistics*, 1960-61, 1965-66, 1970-71, and 1975-76 (Edmonton: University of Alberta, 1961, 1966, 1971, 1976).

⁸ Includes Edmonton, Calgary, and the rest of Alberta.

⁹ Excludes Alberta.

¹⁰ Refers to England and Australia.

¹¹ Refers to England only.

¹² Refers to England and Australia.

¹³ *Evergreen and Gold* (1939); and *Evergreen and Gold* (1942), 174.

¹⁴ *Evergreen and Gold* (1953), 113, 120, 121, 125; *Evergreen and Gold* (1955), 112, 166, 171; and *Evergreen and Gold* (1957), 192.

group appeared such as St. Basil's Obnova for Ukrainian Catholic students, the Association for Mennonite Students, and the Russian Circle.¹⁵ In addition, the membership of ethnic clubs emphasised the increasing number of non-British students. For example, in 1964, the Pakistani Students Association and the Indian Students Association each had thirty members.¹⁶ Moreover, throughout the 1960s, there were cultural events that encouraged students' awareness of different cultures.¹⁷ The World University Service (WUS) held international nights, promoting and educating students about ethnic differences. In 1967, some students celebrated India Republic Day with a cultural program featuring traditional Indian song, dance, and dress.¹⁸ West Indian Week gave students the opportunity to view and discuss films from the West Indies.¹⁹ Although "few" students took part in the university's 1968 International Week, its existence highlighted the growing awareness of non-British cultural traditions by exhibiting the culture of sixty different nations. One of the International Week events was the Miss International Contest, which crowned a Filipino student queen.²⁰ The 1967 Miss International Contest attracted representatives from the Philippines, India, and Trinidad.²¹

This steady progression of enrolment by women and women of different ethnic groups changed the face of the university's campus, yet how did it affect women's university experience? The women whom I interviewed reflected two dominant ethnic groups, the British and the Ukrainians, found at university from 1950 through 1970. Although their experience cannot be generalized, their perceptions about the influence

¹⁵ *Evergreen and Gold* (1964), 83, 84.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 81-112.

¹⁷ This cultural awareness was not exclusive to the University of Alberta. It belongs in a wider movement. After the Second World War, Canada responded to the horrors of ethnic genocide in Nazi Germany by re-evaluating its immigration policies and allowing the entry of displaced people and other ethnic groups such as the Chinese. The increased awareness of other cultures led to the 1963 Royal Commission on Bilingualism; the emphasis on biculturalism (British and French), however, led to a public outcry as other ethnic groups protested their exclusion. Consequently, by 1971, Canada adopted a policy of multiculturalism, a concept that reinforced the idea that Canada was a country built by many ethnic groups, not only the French and British. Donald Avery, *Reluctant Host: Canada's Response to Immigration Workers, 1898-1994* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1995), 146; and Jean Burnet and Howard Palmer, *Coming Canadians: An Introduction to a History of Canada's Peoples* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1988), 223-224.

¹⁸ *Evergreen and Gold* (1967), 136.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 180.

²⁰ *Evergreen and Gold* (1968), 73.

²¹ *Evergreen and Gold* (1967), 105.

that their ethnic background had on their university life can shed light onto female students in general at the University of Alberta. The most interesting responses to the question of ethnic background came from Cathy (1966-70) and Lynn (1966-71) who both identified themselves as “Canadian,” even though Cathy’s surname suggested a British influence and Lynn’s a French one.²² In contrast, the other women all acknowledged a specific ethnic origin. Robin (1967-73) claimed a British and French heritage. Jane* (1970-74) also professed British as her ethnic origin.²³ Leda (1964-68), Margaret (1956-61), and Helen X. (1950-55) were more even more specific. Leda identified herself as a woman of Scottish/Swedish descent while Margaret asserted her Welsh heritage, and Helen X. her Scottish and Irish ancestry.²⁴ Helen H. (1972-73 and 1974-80s) was of Italian parentage.²⁵ The other three women – Eva (1956-59), Mary* (1959-64), and Lorraine (1962-65) – were Ukrainian.²⁶ While the interviewees did not indicate that they felt that their ethnic background affected their university career, in some cases it influenced their activities and thus their lifestyles. Margaret, for instance, sang in a nursing choir because of her Welsh musical background.²⁷ Lorraine lived in St. John’s Ukrainian Orthodox Institute, a co-educational residence affiliated with the University of Alberta, and participated in Ukrainian Orthodox church activities.²⁸ Eva says that her Ukrainian background had little influence on her university career:

It’s really hard to sort out those things ... perhaps, your background from childhood prepares you for certain areas because your family has participated [in them] or it’s been part of the community that you’ve grown up in or lived in ... Later I had Ukrainian friends and participated within social activities ... as a result of having those friends, but that was mostly in third year and after my initial degree.²⁹

²² Cathy, interview by author, tape recording, Edmonton, Alberta, 25 January 2001; and Lynn, interview by author, tape recording, Edmonton, Alberta, 13 February 2001.

²³ Robin, interview by author, tape recording, Edmonton, Alberta, 30 January 2001. Jane* is a pseudonym; Jane*, interview by author, tape recording, Edmonton, Alberta, 6 March 2001.

²⁴ Leda, interview by author, tape recording, Edmonton, Alberta, 23 January 2001; Margaret, interview by author, tape recording, Edmonton, Alberta, 17 March 2001; and Helen X., interview by author, tape recording, Edmonton, Alberta, 12 March 2001. Helen did not want her surname used in this study so to differentiate her from Helen H., the letter X will be used in place of her surname initial;

²⁵ Helen H., interview by author, tape recording, Edmonton, Alberta, 29 March 2001.

²⁶ Eva, interview by author, tape recording, Edmonton, Alberta, 28 March 2001; Mary* is a pseudonym. Mary*, interview by author, tape recording, Edmonton, Alberta, 6 March 2001; Lorraine, interview.

²⁷ Margaret, interview by author, tape recording, Edmonton, Alberta, 17 March 2001.

²⁸ Lorraine, interview.

²⁹ Eva, interview.

Mary*, the only one to remember prejudice, recalls that it was not at university but while growing up.

I guess, I don't know why, but I did feel that at times ... there was prejudice in the little community that I grew up in around Ukrainians. And, I guess I felt, and I don't know if this is legitimate, but I probably felt a little out of place at times, and I was no rocket scientist either so I had to work really hard for my marks.³⁰

Yet, in some instances ethnic background did influence women's choice to attend university. Eva's parents were pleased because they were immigrants:

They were quite excited because this was certainly a novel activity for a child of immigrants. People in the old country – in the family – had attended the equivalent of high school and technical colleges. My mother had a couple of brothers who had technical education in the old country. But none of the girls were educated. My father was more in favour of it than my mother. She wanted me to have the security of a marriage and she wanted me close to home.³¹

Helen H.'s parents were also "very, very for it [her education]. That [was] the whole point of them immigrating to Canada ... to take part in all the opportunities available."³²

Women's ethnic backgrounds had little bearings on what women took at university, but their status as children of immigrants could affect both their decision to attend university and their extracurricular life as individuals participated in activities identified directly or closely with their ethnic background.

With the influx of women and different ethnic groups, the student population at the University of Alberta changed in the post-war period. Yet it seems that women's decisions as to programs of study did not. The report of the Dean of Women, Saretta Sparling (1960-68), to the Royal Commission on the Status of Women in Canada in 1968 revealed that most women at the University of Alberta remained in the more "traditionally feminine" fields of home economics, nursing, rehabilitation therapy, dental hygiene, education and arts. Women only moderately enrolled in pharmacy, science and physical education, and few women entered the perceived "male" faculties of agriculture, commerce, dentistry, law, medicine, and especially engineering.³³ The following chart demonstrates that only a small number of students, male or female, challenged the norm

³⁰ Mary*, interview.

³¹ Eva, interview.

³² Helen H., interview.

³³ Records of the Office of the Dean of Women, Report from Dean of Women to the Royal Commission for the Status of Women, University Archives of Alberta, Acc. 70-168-67.

by entering non-traditional fields in the period between 1950 and 1975. Although some fields, like medicine and law, increased the proportion of women entering them, overall the majority of women remained in education, arts, and nursing.

Table 2-4: Full-time Winter Session Student Enrolment for 1955/56 and 1975/76, by Sex and Field of Study at the University of Alberta

1955/56 Full-time students³⁴

Faculty	Male	Female	% Female
Agriculture	102	2	1.9
Arts/Science	611	230	27.3
Commerce	99	17	4.7
Dentistry	112	2	1.8
Education	256	453	63.9
Engineering	807	1	0.1
Home Ec.	0	77	100
Law	83	3	3.5
Medicine	206	10	4.6
Nursing	0	370	100
Pharmacy	86	39	31.2

1975/76 Full-time students³⁵

Faculty	Male	Female	% Female
Agriculture	662	161	19.6
Arts	1435	1388	51.9
Science	2190	640	28.5
Commerce	1490	343	8.7
Dentistry	171	17	9.0
Education	1317	2753	67.8
Engineering	1427	42	2.9
Home Ec.	1	343	99.7
Law	389	95	22.7
Medicine	594	158	21.0
Nursing	8	276	98.3
Pharmacy	124	260	67.7

This choice, to remain in traditional fields, was both conscious and subconscious for women influenced by finances, both their perception of their social role and society's expectations for them, and personal interests. Although the relative affluence of parents increased, allowing them to send their children to university, the cost of university still remained high. While some women came from prosperous families, others did not and consequently had to work to pay their tuition.³⁶ Throughout the time period studied, finances remained a concern for women and affected their lifestyle choices. In 1955, a *Gateway* article reported that even after working for the whole summer, many students were barely able to earn half the tuition that they needed.³⁷ Similarly, Dean of Women, Maimie Simpson (1946-60), repeatedly articulated her concerns about women students' finances. In her 1953-54 report, she noted that "[i]n two or three cases summer employment was found ... to assist [women students] financially to enter the university."

³⁴ Board of Governors of the University of Alberta, *Report of the Governors* 1955-56, 35-39.

³⁵ Mehra, "Table 2," 11-19.

³⁶ Male students worked as well but since this study looks specifically at women and their construction of gender roles, men have not been included.

³⁷ "Student Able to Pay Half Cost University, *Gateway*, 14 January 1955, 1.

Simpson herself had helped women to find employment – like working in a private home for room and board or babysitting – and to apply for student assistantships to help offset the cost of university.³⁸ The following year, she reiterated women's financial need, asserting that a greater number of women had applied for babysitting positions, student assistantships, and work for room and board.³⁹

My interviewees demonstrate that throughout the period of this study finances remained an issue for students despite growing affluence in Alberta. For instance, only three of my interviewees came from families in which one parent had post-secondary education and a career that reflected it. Robin's father was a veterinarian and Jane's* was a chiropractor; Helen X.'s parents both had higher education, as her father had been an accountant and her mother a teacher. Helen X.'s stepfather, however, was a machinist. Leda's father was a farmer as were Lorraine's parents. Margaret's father was a coalmine manager, Eva's was a railway worker (and later businessman), and Helen H.'s was a painter. Three of the women, Cathy, Mary*, and Lynn, had fathers who were self-employed. Some of the women's mothers (those of Jane*, Robin, Margaret, and Eva, were homemakers, while Lynn's mother was both a homemaker and part-time secretary. Cathy's mother, as a sales clerk, and Helen H.'s mother, as a custodian, both worked part-time outside the home. Helen X.'s mother worked full-time outside the home, as did Lorraine's who was a farmer.⁴⁰ Thus my interviewees demonstrated a wide range of economic strata. However, despite attending university at different times and coming from a variety of ethnic and economic backgrounds, all the women shared one thing: finances were tight throughout their education.

Money concerns affected their lives in various ways such as taking part-time employment or influencing their choice of field. In addition to receiving loans or scholarships, all of the women interviewed took some sort of employment during either the school year, as in the case of nursing students, or during the summer in order to pay for their university. Cathy, for example, lived at home and worked during the summer for the City of Edmonton Tourist Bureau, while Helen H., who also lived at home,

³⁸ Board of Governors of the University of Alberta, *Report of the Governors*, 1953-54, 84.

³⁹ Board of Governors of the University of Alberta, *Report of the Governors*, 1955-56, 105.

⁴⁰ Cathy, interview; Leda, interview; Robin, interview; Lynn, interview; Jane*, interview; Mary*, interview; Helen X., interview; Margaret, interview; Eva, interview; Helen H. interview; and Lorraine, interview.

worked at a bakery.⁴¹ Women's decisions to remain in traditional fields often reflected economic practicality. Not only did traditional areas provide women with a support network in which they created their own role models and leaders,⁴² they were less expensive than non-traditional faculties. The areas with the highest concentration of women – education, arts, nursing – cost less than those with low percentages of female students, such as medicine, law and engineering. Margaret, for instance, wanted to become a physician; however, her lack of financial resources resulted in her taking a nursing degree.⁴³ Although nursing was a five-year course into the 1970s, women in nursing received three years “gratis” in return for their work at the hospital. In contrast, a medical degree took at least six years and cost over \$1000 dollars in the 1950s and over \$3000 by 1976.⁴⁴ Similarly, Lorraine suggested that her

economic status would have had a bearing on this [her choice of degree]... something like medicine or law would probably have been out of the question simply because it meant so many years of university and you know they just couldn't afford that sort of thing. But a science degree was certainly within, you know, within a time span that could have been attainable.⁴⁵

Eva, a commerce graduate, recalled that although money did not affect her choice of degree, it did have an impact on her:

I think my mother would have probably liked me to take a shorter course as they were looking at supporting somebody away from home for at least 3 years and that was fairly expensive then – relatively speaking – at least as expensive as it is now. Because there was the room and board or some sort of accommodations, plus all of the usual costs associated with school. But that was what I wanted, and they were willing to give me a shot.⁴⁶

Thus women more often chose university subjects that required less time and less money which directed them into careers.⁴⁷

⁴¹ Cathy, interview; and Helen H., interview. Helen H. married while at university and subsequently went part-time.

⁴² Londa Schiebinger, *Has Feminism Changed Science?* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1999), 35.

⁴³ Margaret, interview.

⁴⁴ University of Alberta, *Calendar*, 1950-51 to 1975-76.

⁴⁵ Lorraine, interview.

⁴⁶ Eva, interview.

⁴⁷ Jill McCalla Vickers and June Adams, “*But Can You Type?*”: *Canadian Universities and the Status of Women* (Toronto: Clarke, Irwin & Company, 1977), 30.

Women's own perceptions of their place in society also affected their choice to attend university and the programs that they took. According to author Gabrielle Carriere in *Careers For Women in Canada: A Practical Guide* (1946), marriage was women's "ultimate goal" in life. However, in the event that a woman did not find the "proverbial 'good husband'" or in case of "widowhood, accidents, financial difficulties, or even disappointment in marriage," solid skills would ensure that she was not "forced to do mediocre or uninteresting work simply because proper training and realistic thinking did not form a part of her equipment when she entered the working world."⁴⁸ By the 1960s, women's choice to attend university continued to be motivated by personal reasons. Myrna Kostash's interviews with co-eds from across campus found that "[t]here is no reason to believe that most co-eds are on campus to 'catch a man.'"⁴⁹ Rather, she asserted that a woman came to university because "my parents wanted me to go to college" or because "it never occurred to me to do anything else."⁵⁰ For women, university was a "means to an end – a way of getting into the business world or as preparation for a career, an independent life."⁵¹

Women's choice of university degree also reflected the internalization of the social expectation that they were better suited for positions that were seen to more easily combine motherhood and marriage. Even women in non-traditional subjects accepted the idea that women were better adapted for more feminine positions. For example, a woman in pre-med asserted that "[w]omen [were] especially suited for specialization in research, pathology, obstetrics, and gynaecology."⁵² The inference can be made, then, that women were not as well suited for other areas of specialization that interfered with their role as wife and mother as gynaecology and obstetrics provided for the care of women, while research and pathology were considered more "female" aspects of medicine as compared to surgery which required the physician to work long, uncommon hours. Other women

⁴⁸ Gabrielle Carriere, *Careers for Women in Canada: A Practical Guide* (Toronto and Vancouver: J.M. Dent and Sons, 1946), 273.

⁴⁹ Myrna Kostash, "The Feminine Mystique: A Campus Cult," *Gateway*, 23 October 1967, 6-7. See also Myrna Kostash, *All of Baba's Children* (Edmonton: Hurtig Publishers, 1977); and Myrna Kostash et al., *Her Own Woman: Profiles of Ten Canadian Women* (Toronto: MacMillan of Canada, 1975).

⁵⁰ Myrna Kostash, "The Feminine Mystique: A Campus Cult," *Gateway*, 23 October 1967, 6-7.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² Letter from a "Girl in Pre-Med," *Gateway*, 13 November 1964, 5.

accepted traditional roles because they had not been raised with the idea that women could have non-traditional careers. Leda, for instance, remembers that

it seemed to me then that the only thing we realised there was to do was to be a nurse or a teacher or an office worker. I really wasn't aware of other occupations that were open to women. So, it just seemed like teaching was the thing to do.⁵³

Cathy also recalls that societal pressure about "proper" professions for women and her own desire to have a career and a family led to her choosing a traditional career in which she could combine both:

At that point of time, a teacher, being a teacher, was a really great job for a woman. It was the kind of job that women could have for a number of years and then could stop and raise a family and then if they choose, go back to it again. So that seemed to me to be a really, really great option ... I hoped I would marry and have a family and that would also work really well with being a teacher.⁵⁴

In addition, women's university choices were influenced by society's expectation that women would marry and become mothers. Women often took degrees in fields in which they could get employment. According to the University of Alberta's Dean of Women's report to the Royal Commission on the Status of Women in Canada in 1968, those women in non-traditional fields and more general ones like arts experienced problems finding positions. Women who had taken a general arts degree were sometimes often forced into unsatisfactory, semi-skilled jobs. Commerce, engineering, agriculture, and veterinarian science graduates discovered that businesses employers often favoured male candidates.⁵⁵ Eva, for example, had difficulty finding a position that did not discriminate against her:

I can tell you when I was looking for a job when I was finishing, I went to an interview...where was that? United Steel company or a fairly large company, and the interviewer asked me what was I going to do after I got married, and he just totally threw me. I just didn't ever have that question in my mind or at least anticipate...there was no way that I could anticipate it. It just totally freaked me out. And the interview went down the tubes. But this is something I don't think they would ever have asked a male applicant and it was something I never really considered how I would use my business knowledge. But obviously it was part of the structure of female applicants to what might have been perceived as male jobs in those days. So the attitude was out there.⁵⁶

⁵³ Leda, interview.

⁵⁴ Cathy, interview.

⁵⁵ Dean of Women, Report to Royal Commission.

⁵⁶ Eva, interview.

In the end, Eva, who had thought that more traditional occupations “didn’t seem to feel right for me,” became a teacher and “taught for about thirty-six years.”⁵⁷ Yet, despite women’s internalization of proper gender roles and practical financial considerations, women’s decisions also reflected their own interests. Eva steered away from traditional degrees and took commerce

because I knew business really well. I didn’t want to be a secretary, I didn’t want to be a nurse, I didn’t want to be a teacher, and I didn’t know much else. So because my Dad had a business, the idea of taking an education in business [was attractive] ...but I didn’t really know what that meant. I had no idea what the courses were going to be like or what areas of studies I would be attempting or anything else. It was business that was the key word.⁵⁸

Helen X. remembers that she had

always [been] interested in anything ... the medical line, the health line [of work] ... My parents suggested maybe that I’d like to take medicine, but I felt it would be too much work. I felt more comfortable in nursing ... I was unsure how I would fit in with a larger group of students as far as academic work was concerned, and I felt for sure that I could handle nursing. But I wasn’t so sure about medicine.⁵⁹

Similarly, Lorraine recalls that interest played a significant role in her choice of chemistry:

I suppose I was rather a rebel, and I really didn’t want anything traditional so I thought that chemistry could be a good thing to get into, and it was interesting, and I had an interest in it at the time.⁶⁰

Cathy enjoyed home economics so much that she merged her desire for a good career, teaching, with her passion for sewing and cooking.⁶¹ Helen H., on the other hand, left her chosen field for teaching when she realised that she did not like organic chemistry:

You have to make choices. And I wasn’t prepared to go through all the hassle of taking something I didn’t enjoy to get to something I would enjoy. So I thought well, ... – isn’t that awful – I’ll go into education.⁶²

The choices that women made at university were not simple nor did they always conform to the status quo. Rather, women selected their university fields based on their own

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Helen X., interview.

⁶⁰ Lorraine, interview.

⁶¹ Cathy, interview.

⁶² Helen H., interview.

interests, on finances, and on social expectations. Non-traditional programs may have interested women, but they did not always allow them to be mothers and wives. Robin, however, did both as she took a medical degree and married; however, despite becoming a physician society continued to look at her as a wife as opposed to her own person and a professional:

When I graduated, I applied for a charge card and my charge application got rejected. So I got a new one and filled in exactly the same information but put in Dr. instead of Mrs. And it was accepted like that (snaps her fingers). So there were lots of women's equality issues in terms of how you were treated, how you were looked at, what you'll get accepted for and how you are accepted for who you are, [and] what you want to do ... I have one friend who I think still feels that some of what I do is a woman's liberation equality thing and that it is okay because of my profession but ... that would not work in [most female-male relationships] because what the men have done is always more important than what the woman does.⁶³

In general, more "traditional" degrees permitted women to combine a career with family, thus attracting a high proportion of female students who "wanted it all."

Yet despite similar choices in taking traditional programs at the University of Alberta, throughout the period studied, women students were not a cohesive group. Although they steadily entered career options that were traditionally viewed as women's, in the late 1960s and early 1970s there was no clear consensus within the undergraduate female student body about women's roles as traditional options were increasingly condemned. Home Economics, for instance, tried to counter the backlash against its reputation of "training ... women in scientific methods of homemaking" in the 1970s. The Home Economics Faculty reported in the 1970 *Evergreen and Gold* yearbook that "nothing could be more unrepresentative of the present graduates" as its program offered students a link into a Bachelor of Science degree through its emphasis on biology and chemistry courses.⁶⁴ Nursing was another traditional female field that was challenged in the late 1960s. In 1954, an article in the *Gateway* had reinforced the image of nursing as an area that complemented women's social roles, describing a nurse as "a young lady who wished to gratify her maternal instinct without getting married."⁶⁵ By 1969, however, women began to review their ideas about nursing, questioning the notion of

⁶³ Robin, interview.

⁶⁴ *Evergreen and Gold* (1970), 62.

⁶⁵ "Mincemeat," *Gateway*, 19 October 1954, 2.

traditional fields and women's "proper" ideal role. In "Harlequin Image Real?" Dorothy Constable argues that the nursing faculty was not like a Harlequin storybook in which women assuaged their maternal instincts and married wealthy men; instead nursing for students was a "different world" as it "isolated" them. Students, until their fifth year, had to live in residence, and, in exchange for room and board, women students worked at the hospital. Their work experience matured nursing students quickly as they were responsible for all the beds, temperatures, and pulses of the patients on their wards. Constable concluded that women took nursing for the "selfish gratification that comes from being able to help other people. And besides that you have a kind of power over the patients."⁶⁶ In contrast, another contemporary article by Marion Snethlage illustrated the growing dissatisfaction of traditional fields as the women's liberation movement increasingly pushed ideas of women's equality with men. A former nursing trainee at the Foothills Hospital in Calgary, Snethlage avowed that "nursing education train[ed] the student to be passive, complacent and uncreative technicians," asserting not only that hospitals and the university curriculum had financial control over nursing students but also that the relationship of nurses to doctors reinforced a traditional male/female hierarchy.⁶⁷ As well, according to Snethlage, nursing students were taught that they were "inferior member[s] of the nursing teams and as such [have] nothing to add to the care of the patient." For instance, head nurses and doctors knew "much better what [was] good for the patient" and students were taught not to speak to the "busy" doctors. Condemning the nursing residences, Snethlage suggested that they limited women's contacts outside the field of medicine and their perceptions of the world.⁶⁸ Constable and Snethlage illustrated the very diverse ways in which women interpreted their social roles in light of the women's liberation movement. Rather than reject gender roles for women, Constable sought to work within them to dispel myths that outsiders had about nursing, while Snethlage rejected the field of nursing, accusing it of producing graduates who failed to live up to the standards of equality set by the women's liberation movement.

⁶⁶ Dorothy Constable, "Harlequin Image Real?" *Gateway*, 12 December 1969, 3.

⁶⁷ Marion Shethlage, "Nursing Education in Alberta: Changing Perspectives, An Evaluation by a Former Insider," *Gateway*, 12 December 1969, 4-5.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 6.

Women within the medical field also attacked the more “traditional” choice of nursing. In 1964, a letter to the *Gateway* by a female pre-medical student attempted to “explain to the “unknowing” populace exactly why some girls would rather be doctors than nurses or teachers.” She alleged that “girls who want to be doctors want to do more for a person’s health than give shots, make beds, or serve meals. In other words, they want to play a major part in the making of healthy people.”⁶⁹ She dismissed the importance of nursing in the health care field by attacking women who chose nursing as a career and who chose marriage. “Why shouldn’t they study what interests them most without the noisy (sometimes rude) disapproval of others,” she questioned, “especially girls whose only ambition in life is to get married and raise children.”⁷⁰ Nursing students, however, were not content to be subordinates. In the next issue of the newspaper, a nursing student replied to the “girl in pre-med.” She stated that while she “admire[d]” the other woman for her “decision to enter medicine,” the pre-medical student should not “run down the doctor’s best friend – the nurse.” In fact, the nursing student

resent[ed] the implication that nurses [were] merely part of functional design. Being a nurse – a good nurse, entail[ed] far more than to ‘give shots, make beds, or serve meals.’ These [were] mundane tasks that [they had] to perform; ... As for the ‘major part in making of healthy people’ – an intelligent, experienced graduate nurse [knew] almost as well as the doctor what medications and treatments [were] to be prescribed ... [as well] a patient’s mental and emotional well-being [was] left almost entirely in her hands ... I suggest that you do some maturing before entering medical school. I also hope that the conceit for medicine and doctors of medicine becomes tempered with humility in the realization that no one knows all there is to know about human anatomy and physiology.”⁷¹

Although most women took similar paths in their university careers, changing perceptions of women’s social roles in the 1960s provoked controversy over conventional choices as women began to question and challenge women who took traditional degrees. Some women in “feminine” programs defended their position, asserting their rights to be anything they wanted, even if their choices did not confront gender inequality. These debates between women revealed the inconsistent nature of the women’s movement, as

⁶⁹ “Girl in Pre-Med,” 5.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 5.

⁷¹ L. Crawshaw, “Nurse Answers ‘Doctor,’” *Gateway*, 20 November 1964, 5.

women did not always believe that in order to achieve equality they must reject traditional careers.

The post-war university saw several changes in its student population as students of different ethnic backgrounds and of a different sex began to enter the University of Alberta in greater numbers. However, despite these changes, women students remained clustered in traditional female programs. Women and the general campus society accepted the ideal of wife and mother; similarly women's own beliefs and social norms about women's proper role and finances encouraged women to remain in traditional female areas. Interest sometimes, but not always, pulled women into non-traditional fields. However, some women, due to the desire to have a family or because of the job market, were pushed back into traditional courses which promised them the opportunity to combine home and family with a career.

Chapter 3

The Construction of Attitudes towards Gender and Female Sexuality By the University and Male and Female Undergraduate Students

I do remember that I spent my whole life on campus. I don't think I lived off of campus. All my friends were on campus, and we'd go to their homes. This was a little city. I remember going downtown, and I remember being shocked – how everybody was so different, older and strange – and then I realized that I didn't live in the city; I lived on campus and everybody was so different to me. So I just had my own little world on campus.¹

For many students, campus life enveloped them in what Lynn called their “own little world.” Within this domain, students both adopted attitudes about gender and sexuality from general Canadian society and forged their own. In mainstream Canadian society, the period between 1950 and 1975 was one of social change in which women's sexuality and gender roles shifted quickly. At the University of Alberta, ideas about women's roles and later about women's liberation and equality passed through the campus world, but beneath the surface, most students' attitudes were resistant to change. The university created one ideal of gender roles; undergraduate women students, however, merged the conservative ideals of the university with their own to create a view of womanhood which both adhered to and challenged preconceived notions about women.

University policies and university officials helped to establish standards concerning the behaviour of female students by creating rules to protect women from sexuality as well as emphasise their proper societal role as well-behaved, well-mannered young women. The Dean of Women, as the university official mostly closely in touch with women students, often set the standards. From 1950 to 1975, there were three different Deans of Women or Advisors and Wardens of Pembina Hall: Maimie Simpson, 1946-60, Saretta Sparling, 1960-68, and Isabel Munroe, 1968-75.² Before becoming dean, Simpson was a professor of education, while Sparling and Munroe were social workers. Sparling worked as a family court counsellor (the only one of the three to be

¹ Lynn, interview by author, tape recording, Edmonton, Alberta, 13 February 2001. Lynn was a nursing student at the university from 1966 to 1971.

² Before 1951, the Dean of Women's title was Advisor and Warden of Pembina Hall.

married, she had resumed her career after her husband's death), while Munroe was employed by Edmonton's Family Service Association.³ During the period 1950 to 1975, most students who attended university were under the age of twenty-one; as a result, until the age of majority was changed to eighteen in 1971, most of the students who came to university were legally minors. Consequently, the university assumed the role of parent (*in loco parentis*)⁴ and provided students with rules that affected every aspect of their lives – including dress, residence protocol, and sexual behaviour. According to Dean Sparling, the experience of living in women-only residences gave women an “education in living graciously.”⁵ She also asserted that sex-specific residences were not places designed to protect women from their sexuality as the regulations about residences were not a “sex thing,” but places intended to provide students with a parental influence, allow women an opportunity to meet their peers, let them live close to campus, and prevent isolation. “You don’t protect them in res,” she said, “you can’t.”⁶ Yet despite her admonishment, the campus rules that existed emphasised premarital chastity, protection, and “graciousness.”

Through dress codes the university tried to impress upon women the ideal that they should look and dress in ways that highlighted their femininity. Dress codes throughout the period, but especially during the 1950s, ensured that women wore skirts and were well-groomed. In the 1950s, Eva remembers how persuasive the ideas of proper dress were:

And another thing – this is a little by the way, you’ll probably appreciate it from your own perspective of being a university student – one of my biggest worries of first year was having the appropriate hat to go to the Dean’s tea, and you had to go to the tea. And we went to see Dean Maggie Simpson, she was a wonderful woman and we would wait

³ Clipping files of Maimie Simpson; Saretta Sparling; and Isabel Munroe, City of Edmonton Archives, Edmonton, Alberta. Jana Nidiffer, *Pioneering Deans of Women: More than Wise and Pious Matrons* (New York and London: Teachers College Press, 2000) studies the origins and the legacy of dean of women at American universities, arguing that the Dean of Women contributed to women’s professionalism and helped to improve the position of women on campus.

⁴ Doug Owsram, *Born at the Right Time: A History of the Baby-Boom Generation* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 178.

⁵ Violet Vichech suggested that co-ed residences would benefit students by easing the housing shortages that were occurring in the early 1960s at the university. She argued that co-ed residences would not threaten students’ morality because the “moral temptation” of co-educational living depended on the students involved. Violet Vichech, “Go Co-ed?” *Gateway*, 20 October 1961, 8.

⁶ Ginger Bradley, “‘Sex Thing’ Not Reason For Dean’s Suggestion,” *Gateway*, 16 February 1965, 7.

in groups – 25 or 30 in her apartment – and we all had these nice hats... Hats were more commonplace, and you were going to tea so you had to be appropriately dressed.⁷

In contrast, Leda's impression of Dean Simpson's successor was not as pleasant. An Arts/Education student in the mid-1960s, she recalls meeting Dean Sparling, as most first-year students did, and being told that women students were never to wear pants to class.⁸ In fact, Dean Sparling even preferred the more feminine, yet shorter, miniskirts to pants.⁹ As late as 1969, residences had dress codes that required women to wear dresses or skirts at all evening and Sunday meals.¹⁰ These dress codes were rigidly enforced as infractions were dealt with by sending the transgressors before a disciplinary committee.¹¹

Through the 1950s and 1960s, women students also faced restrictions with respect to leaving campus and curfews. The latter were in place to protect women from both the dangers of the world and their own sexuality by ensuring that the university knew where women were (or where they were not) at night. Regulations were most strict at the start of the 1950s. For instance, in 1952, women students challenged the "pointless and Victorian" rule that they could not leave the university grounds without first reporting to the residence.¹² The university responded and abolished leave restrictions for women; thereafter, women students who lived in fraternity houses, Pembina Hall, and the Nurses Residence, could leave campus, like male students, without checking with their residences.¹³ Nonetheless, while women won some liberty, other restrictions – such as curfews – remained. The curfew in 1965, for instance, permitted first-year female students to stay out until eleven thirty in the evening on weekdays and one in the morning on Saturdays. As well they were also allowed four extra one o'clocks in the morning late leaves per month, eight two o'clocks in the mornings per year, and six three o'clocks in the mornings leaves per year, and three overnight passes.¹⁴ Students with written permission from their parents received an unlimited number of overnight passes.

⁷ Eva, interview by author, tape recording, Edmonton, Alberta, 28 March 2001.

⁸ Leda, interview by author, tape recording, Edmonton, Alberta, 23 January 2001.

⁹ Dennis Fitzgerald, "Leg-lovers Love Those Lovely Minis," *Gateway*, 26 October 1967, 8.

¹⁰ "Aw Come On!," *Gateway*, 25 September 1969, 7.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² "Campus Women Freed of Leave Restrictions," *Gateway*, 4 January 1952, 1.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Bradley, "Sex Thing," 7.

Restrictions were not exclusive to women-only residences. Lister Hall, a co-ed residence, also imposed curfews and limited the number of late passes women students could have per year. Yet the curfews were not applied equally. Women students past their first year enjoyed the privilege of being able to stay out until two in the morning on Fridays and Saturdays. Likewise, students who assumed greater responsibilities by serving on the House Committee, who already had one degree, or who were over the age of twenty-one (legally adults) had different rules: they had three in the morning leaves every night, except for Sundays.¹⁵ Women's coming and goings were closely monitored. The Nurses Residence, for instance, had a little booth at the front entrance where a door monitor guarded the entryway and residents signed in and out. Keith Wilkinson in his 1966 study of the Lister Hall residence suggested that these curfews for women were not as "stringent" as they appeared since women could apply, with written permission from their family, for an unlimited number of overnight passes. He based his conclusion on the fact that only six leaves were requested during the 1965/66 school year and that relatively few late leaves were ever used.¹⁶ Nonetheless, dress regulations and curfews limited women's freedoms. The university, acting in its role of guardian, imposed restrictions on women that helped to shape gender ideals, guaranteeing that women looked and behaved (by not staying out late and getting into mischief, or, worse, into sex) like proper young ladies.

Students who lived off campus were not immune to regulations either. They may have escaped the more stringent rules, but the university still tried to act as guardian. One interviewee, Eva (1956-59), recalls that some students who lived off-campus lived in less than ideal surroundings – small, cramped places.¹⁷ The university, aware of these conditions, attempted to regulate the off-campus housing that it recommended to students in the 1960s. In its role of surrogate parent, the university wanted to ensure that all its "children" were well cared for and, consequently, required that university-approved off-campus housing met certain standards such as adequate lighting and ventilation. The Annual Report of the Assistant to the Dean of Women for the 1967-68 academic year,

¹⁵ W. Keith Wilkinson, "Residence Culture: A Descriptive Study of the Culture of the Lister Hall Residence Complex" (M.Ed. thesis, University of Alberta, 1966), 90-91.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 91.

¹⁷ Eva, interview.

“Concerns from Women,” suggested that off-campus lodgings continued to have problems ranging from lack of recreation for women to isolation and unsatisfactory study conditions.¹⁸ The university’s attempts to regulate off-campus student sexuality were similarly unsuccessful. When the university attempted to have recommended off-campus housing prohibit women entertaining men in their bedrooms or vice versa in 1964, students protested. They argued that the university had no place dictating their morals. One student declared, “the decision is quite ridiculous. If we could not behave like adults we would not be at varsity.”¹⁹ Leda (1964-68) remembers that only one place where she lived, during her first year, had rules: “I don’t think we could, say, have boys come up to the room or anything like that in that one house that I stayed in. Other than that when I rented a room, no one would have known if I did have somebody else.”²⁰

Although the university had relaxed its strict male and female segregation by the late 1960s, it continued to reinforce its ideas about gender roles. Pembina Hall made *Gateway* headlines, “Men allowed in Pembina,” when it first allowed male visitors into the residence in the fall of 1968. The new rules allowed women to meet their male friends in the lobby and to escort them to and from their rooms between the hours of seven and eleven in the evenings on weekdays, from two in the afternoon to eleven in the evening on Saturdays, and from two to five in the afternoon on Sundays.²¹ Nonetheless, decorum was maintained, as men were not permitted to wander around or to use the washrooms.²² Similarly, co-ed residences of the early 1960s limited interaction between men and women. Lorraine, a science student (1962-65), recalls the strict segregation in the first co-ed residence to be affiliated with the University of Alberta (although not part of its housing structure), St. John’s Ukrainian Orthodox Institute:

The boys were on the two bottom floors and the girls were on the top floor. And it was ... rather rigidly enforced. We ate together and there was a common lounge where the television was and so forth. But no guys were allowed upstairs and we weren’t allowed downstairs.²³

¹⁸ Records of the Office of the Dean of Women, Annual Report of the Assistant to the Dean of Women, 1967-68, University of Alberta Archives (UAA), Edmonton, Alberta, Acc. 70-168-67.

¹⁹ “Sex and the Off-Campus Student,” *Gateway*, 2 October 1964, 1.

²⁰ Leda, interview.

²¹ “Men allowed in Pembina,” *Gateway*, 16 October 1968, 3.

²² Ibid.

²³ Lorraine, interview by author, tape recording, Two Hills, Alberta, 2 April 2001.

Lister Hall, another co-ed residence established in the mid-1960s, had similar rules. For instance, male and female students were only permitted to intermingle on the main floor Rotunda. Even Mackenzie Tower, which housed both male and female residents on different floors, practiced strict segregation.²⁴ By 1967, rules were less stringent. The male residences at St. Joseph's and St. Stephen's Colleges, as well as Lister Hall's Henday Tower allowed male students to invite female students up to their private rooms. However, visits were only permitted during certain hours.²⁵ Likewise, Robin (1967-73) remembers her residence experience:

It wasn't mixed floors. And you could only have males in on Sundays from 2 – 4 if you kept your door open. And in the first term that you were there, you had to be in by midnight - they checked you in. Or then they gave you...I can't remember...4 one o'clock, 4 two o'clocks and a couple of 3 o'clocks before Christmas time or something. And if you didn't abide by those, then you had to stay in some Saturday nights with the floor senior watching over you.²⁶

Although Robin did not state her specific residence, she likely lived in Lister Hall's Kelsey Tower as women there were permitted to entertain males in their rooms from two to five in the afternoons on Sundays.²⁷

University regulations for student conduct were not exclusive to women since men also had them, however, the official response to male deviance was much different than it was to female transgressions. Students were not without their rights, as the university could not, for example, legally conduct liquor raids. Officials could only enter a student's room for maintenance or housekeeping purposes. Nonetheless, all university residences – male, female, and co-ed – prohibited the use of alcohol and inviting members of the opposite sex into private rooms until the late 1960s.²⁸ In 1965, for example, before the university changed its rules, a male student was expelled from the co-ed residence, Lister Hall, for entertaining his girlfriend in his room.²⁹ In general, men's offences were more often alcohol related; for less serious offences, the penalty was a fine of up to ten dollars, while serious offences could garner a fine of up to twenty-five

²⁴ Wilkinson, "Residence," 90.

²⁵ Susan George, "Campus Residences Have New Rules and Regulations on Visiting Hours," *Gateway*, 21 November 1967, 1.

²⁶ Robin, interview by author, tape recording, Edmonton, Alberta, 30 January 2001.

²⁷ George, "Campus Residences," 1.

²⁸ Wilkinson, "Residence," 90.

²⁹ "U of A Student Expelled from Lister Hall," *Gateway*, 17 November 1965, 1.

dollars.³⁰ Wilkinson's study about Lister Hall revealed that officials even turned a blind eye to alcohol, only punishing the more severe violations such as having a beer keg in one's room.³¹ In contrast, when women transgressed against a university rule, they received a warning from the House Committee, and when they stayed out past their curfew, they lost a late leave pass, and when they committed more serious misconducts they received a warning.³² These restrictions against women were, in a manner, harsher than those imposed on men. Men, for example, were penalized with a fine if they were discovered possessing alcohol; in contrast, women lost a measure of their freedom, not only did they have a curfew while men did not, but they were punished by losing even more liberty when they stayed out past their curfew.

In the period of 1950 to the early 1970s, the university attempted to influence every aspect of women's lives – their dress, their bedtimes, and their morality. Students had mixed reactions to university policies, demonstrating the different ways in which official regulations and ideals interacted with campus culture as students negotiated their way through restrictions on their freedom and independence. Of the eleven women whom I interviewed, six lived in residence, and all but two of the six accepted the rules imposed on them. The interviewees who lived in residence during the 1950s had few problems and did not see the rules as infringements upon their freedoms. Rather their views suggest that leaving home was not a transition to adulthood or greater independence. Margaret, a nursing student from 1956 to 1961, found that the rules were really no different than those she had at home with her parents.³³ Likewise, Eva, who had lived in her fraternity house for one year, did not protest the rules, saying that there were "rules everywhere" not just in residence.³⁴ The interviewees from the 1960s and early 1970s, however, began to chafe at the restrictions on their freedom. Mary*, a nursing student in the early 1960s, reported that at times she became upset with the curfews.³⁵ Robin, who attended university in the late 1960s and early 1970s, was more critical and dismissive of the rules:

³⁰ Wilkinson, "Residence," 92.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 166.

³² *Ibid.*, 92.

³³ Margaret, interview by author, tape recording, Edmonton, Alberta, 17 March 2001.

³⁴ Eva, interview.

³⁵ Mary* is a pseudonym. Mary*, interview by author, tape recording, Edmonton, Alberta, 6 March 2001.

I mean I sort of looked at them and I thought this is ridiculous. But they weren't rules that went against what I would have done anyway. I mean, yeah, I did have alcohol in my room, but it wasn't like something that we ever overdid anyway...a mickey...unlike some of the men who would smuggle in kegs and stuff like that. And I mean I never was one for staying up late so it wasn't that it went against my own standards.³⁶

The limitations on their independence always caused some students to negotiate the rules by flouting them or agitating for change. For instance, Helen X., a student in the 1950s, recalls that there were ways to circumvent the curfews, such as sneaking into the building.³⁷ Similarly, students like Robin challenged both the residence rules and the law (if they were underage) when they drank alcohol on school property. In Lister Hall, in the mid-1960s, 30 per cent of women and 80 per cent of men reported that they had consumed alcohol in residence.³⁸ Robin remembers that "the age for legally drinking alcohol was twenty-one [in 1967] so you were not allowed to have alcohol in residence...it doesn't mean that we didn't have it. But, we weren't supposed to. So you had to hide it."³⁹ Students also demonstrated the tensions between official ideals and changing student perceptions by beginning to question the policies of sex segregation in residences and dress codes in the early 1960s. One female student who argued for co-ed residences in the pages of the *Gateway* in 1962 suggested that the university's rule of sex segregation was "old fashioned." She also said that although women had a curfew they could obtain sleep outs with little difficulty, implying that if women were going to have sex or share a room with a man, they could do so on their sleep outs.⁴⁰ As well, when Lister Hall implemented dress codes that would not allow women "improperly dress[ed]" in slacks or men who wore jeans to eat in the hall's cafeteria, students objected. Although one student concurred with the rules, arguing that they were in place to promote "cleanliness," the Students' Union condemned the regulations.⁴¹ By the 1970s, students were gaining greater freedoms as a result of agitation. Women's curfews were extended

³⁶ Robin, interview.

³⁷ Helen did not want her surname used in this study so to differentiate her from Helen H., the letter X will be used in place of her surname initial; Helen X., interview by author, tape recording, Edmonton, Alberta, 12 March 2001.

³⁸ Wilkinson, "Residence," 165.

³⁹ Robin, interview.

⁴⁰ Anne Geddes, "Let's Go Co-ed," *Gateway*, 2 November 1962, 4.

⁴¹ Bryan Campbell, "Don't Like It? Eat Elsewhere ... Student [sic] Council Disagrees," *Gateway*, 16 October 1964, 3.

to three in the morning across the board and all students were permitted to have members of the opposite sex visit in their rooms.⁴² The changing rules in residence mirrored the changing values of society. The institution became less of a surrogate parent, restricting its role to educator rather than protector of morals and creator of gender roles. Nonetheless, the curfews remained into the 1970s suggesting that the university was loathed to entirely relinquish its role in guiding women towards proper morality and behaviour.

In addition to residence rules, the university attempted to control and reinforce gender norms by insinuating itself into the sexual lives of women students. Until the 1970s, every first-year woman student was expected to attend a lecture given by Dr. Ross Vant at the beginning of the school year. Professor Vant, a specialist in obstetrics and gynaecology, first began his lectures to co-eds in 1945. In the early period, the 1950s and early 1960s, they were often women's first introduction to sex, but by the 1970s, his talks were considered staid and conventional. In the 1950s, Dr. Vant's candour about sex and sexuality was something many women had never heard before reaching university. One of my interviewees, Margaret, remembers that Dr. Vant's lectures were "shocking" and "coarse."⁴³ Nonetheless, sexual intercourse was addressed in a purely scientific way as his emphasis was on women's general health such as their eating, sleeping, and dressing habits rather than intercourse itself.⁴⁴ However, by the late 1960s, as students became more informed about sex from other sources, Dr. Vant, in 1968, attempted to attract students by offering "open discussions" on sex, birth control, venereal diseases and personal hygiene.⁴⁵ He spoke candidly about sex, telling students to "Use horse sense in your sex" and responding to questions such as "Will contraceptives spoil your sex life?" Vant also told women that if they were interested in using the Pill, a birth control method that was still prohibited in 1968, they should seek out medical advice. In Dr. Vant's lectures, "sex [was] a normal topic."⁴⁶ Nonetheless, Dr. Vant furthered the university's image of a "proper" young woman by injecting his talks with a moral edge. To prevent

⁴² Doug Owsram, "The Baby Boom and the Transformation of the University of Alberta," in *Edmonton: The Life of a City*, ed. Bob Hesketh and Frances Swyripa (Edmonton: NeWest Publishers, 1995), 292.

⁴³ Margaret, interview.

⁴⁴ Helene Chomiak, "Vant Arms Freshettes With Facts and Warnings," *Gateway*, 9 October 1964, 1.

⁴⁵ "Short Shorts," *Gateway*, 3 October 1968, 2.

⁴⁶ Catrina Sinclair, "Use Horse Sense in Your Sex," *Gateway*, 3 October 1968, 8.

pregnancy, he suggested that women “keep [their] legs together.”⁴⁷ As well, Vant enforced the notion that sex was not just about the individual. Women, he said, had an “obligation to [themselves] or the university” as the purpose of university was to provide a place for students to learn, suggesting that by having sex women failed the university and themselves.⁴⁸ Moreover, not only did women have a duty to the university, but to their partner. Like much of mainstream society, he suggested that petting was permitted, but it should go no further and that it was the woman’s responsibility to stop her partner. Dr. Vant himself “wouldn’t [have] trust[ed] a man as far as [he] could throw him.”⁴⁹ In 1965, he reiterated these views, stating that although sexual desire was normal and “[t]imes have changed ... there’s still a speed limit.”⁵⁰ By the end of the decade, his talks were still infused with morality as he advised women to wait for a man whom they respected before having sex and cautioned them to go to Student Health Services if they suspected they had contracted a venereal disease.⁵¹ Reflecting the university’s position, Dr. Vant encouraged women to remain virtuous by arming women with knowledge and reinforcing the idea that women should wait for a loving relationship such as marriage.

While Dr. Vant had always been forthright concerning the actual act of sex, by the late 1960s, sexual intercourse was being more openly discussed among some students, and his talks began to be seen as outdated. Student commentators in the *Gateway* mocked him: “Here at the U of A we have the Dr. Ross Vant method of sexual release. He recommends a few laps around the track.”⁵² Although the university expected women students to go to the lectures, not all of them did, and in 1968, Dr. Vant’s lectures were so poorly attended that the Wauneita Society, an organisation to which all women undergraduates automatically belonged, questioned their value for women.⁵³ Originally the lectures were intended for first-year women, but in 1965, male students were also provided with one.⁵⁴ By 1967, Vant offered four lectures: two for single women, one for

⁴⁷ Chomiak, “Vant Arms Freshettes,” 1.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ginger Bradley, “Vant Advocates Track Work for Sexually-Inclined People,” *Gateway*, 29 September 1965, 3.

⁵¹ Sinclair, “Use Horse Sense,” 8.

⁵² Bruce Terrier, “Does Sex Exist?” *Gateway*, 19 January 1966, 2.

⁵³ Records of the Wauneita Society, Minutes, 16 October 1968, UAA, Acc. 77-63-61.1.

⁵⁴ Elaine Chalus, “From Friedan to Feminism,” in *Standing on New Ground: Women in Alberta*, ed. Catherine A. Cavanaugh and Randi R. Warne (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1993), 133.

married women, and one for men.⁵⁵ The fact that he had a separate lecture for married and single women highlights the morality that the university, through Dr. Vant, tried to impose as he likely discussed different topics depending on whether or not the group was married. Perhaps in an effort to increase attendance, the Wauneita Society, moved to abolish the sex segregation of the lectures and permit male students into the female-only talks.⁵⁶ Dr. Vant's lectures ended in the 1970s as students, especially women students, no longer had any need for "open" discussions about sexual intercourse as public discourse about sex and sexual behaviour become more common. For over two decades, however, Vant's discussions had offered women factual information and advice about sexual intercourse, even as they reinforced the university's ideas about proper sexual behaviour, which expected women to wait for the "right man," and ideally for marriage, before having intercourse.

While university policies illustrated official views about gender and sex, and elicited mixed responses to them, campus politics reflected the same complexity in their creation of gender roles at the university during the 1960s and 1970s. Since campus life became increasingly politicised during these two decades, the focus here will be on developments then rather than on the earlier, less activist, period. In a helter-skelter fashion, during the 1960s students were both liberal and conservative in their political actions, and their politics were both gendered and non-gendered. Not every student took part in an activist movement; many, like those I interviewed, rarely participated in campus politics. Their apathy illustrates part of the conservative nature of the students at the university. These women had their own views on issues such as women's role in society and later on the women's liberation movement but like much of campus, they kept their views to themselves. Leda, for example, reminisced that she was not terribly aware of social, economic or political issues outside the university: "I probably just wasn't just aware. I think kids now are much more aware of that. I was probably just so centred on, you know, what I was studying, I don't think I really paid attention to what was going on."⁵⁷

⁵⁵ Records of the Dean of Women, Annual Report 1967-68.

⁵⁶ Wauneita Minutes, 30 April 1968.

⁵⁷ Leda, interview.

Students throughout Canada and the United States became more socially and politically aware during the period. Students in Quebec in 1964, for example, formed the Union Generales des Etudiants Quebecois (UGEQ) in order to form their own structures and plans for Quebec nationalism.⁵⁸ At the University of Alberta, both male and female students participated in politics; some took a direct role in student governance or voted in elections or even supported political activism, and still many, the majority, simply read and thought about the different political issues occurring. Those involved in activism at the university often focused much of their attention on internal issues.⁵⁹ For instance, their largest mobilization was against university policies, in the form of marches and sit-ins. In 1968, over three thousand students marched to the Alberta Legislature to protest rising tuition fees.⁶⁰ Another, albeit much smaller march, occurred in 1968 when 150 students demanded that the sociology department hold open meetings and become more democratic towards students. Afterwards the students left in an “orderly fashion” to hold a meeting to discuss further action.⁶¹ Even though some of the largest protests tended to be about personal issues, students became actively involved in external politics in the late 1960s. In 1968, six hundred students staged a protest against the Vietnam War.⁶² A contemporary survey conducted by the *Gateway* found that a majority of students favoured the withdrawal of United States forces from Vietnam and even more felt that Canada should not send troops.⁶³ Also, in 1968, 1800 students came to hear two Black Panthers outline their positions on a number of issues.⁶⁴ As well, in 1970, the Students’ Union resolved that the student government would officially oppose the Vietnam War and pledged to sponsor an anti-war GI speaker, an International Day of protest, and a signing campaign.⁶⁵

However, more often than not, student activism appeared in form of editorials in the student newspaper. The student body’s overall apathy sparked criticism from Rich

⁵⁸ Owram, *Born at the Right Time*, 234; See Cyril Levitt, *Children of Privilege: Student Revolts in the Sixties: A Study of Student Movements in Canada, the United States, and West Germany* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984).

⁵⁹ Owram, “Baby Boom,” 291.

⁶⁰ University of Alberta yearbook, *Evergreen and Gold* (1969), 156-157.

⁶¹ Dan Jamieson, “Arts Students March on Tory,” *Gateway*, 2 December 1968, 1.

⁶² *Evergreen and Gold* (1968), 38-39.

⁶³ “U of A Students Favor a Negotiated Withdrawal of US Vietnam Forces,” *Gateway*, 9 February 1968, 3.

⁶⁴ “Black Panthers,” *Gateway*, 20 November 1969, 1.

⁶⁵ Records of the Students’ Union, Council Minutes, 1970-1971, 28 September 1970, UAA, Acc. 78-127.

Vivone, a *Gateway* reporter, who condemned the “dull, dull leadership race” in 1968 when Marilyn Pilkington was acclaimed Students’ Union president when she proved to be the only one to have her application in on time. Vivone singled out in particular the “bearded types and guitar players” who preached action, but in reality only “want[ed] to talk and sing songs, and be unhappy” when things actually got done in the world by “work and sweat.”⁶⁶ An editorial cartoon in 1969 further mocked the lack of action at the University of Alberta. It featured a fist and within the fist issues of student protest on different campuses were depicted: tenure at Carleton, racial discrimination at Sir George Williams,⁶⁷ PSA repression at Simon Fraser,⁶⁸ censorship at McGill, Amchitka at University of British Columbia,⁶⁹ and, at the University of Alberta the closure of the yearbook.⁷⁰ Similarly, David Leadbeater, Students’ Union president in 1969/70, commented harshly that even though a student protest at Kent University in the United States had killed four people, the students and council at the University of Alberta continued to talk about their yearbook.⁷¹

Within the complex world of campus, political agendas and activism experienced a division of gender roles. For example, women’s participation in official campus politics was hampered by their sex. In the Students’ Union, male students were more often than not elected to the position of president, while female students held the position of vice-president. Of sixty-one Students’ Union presidents between 1909 and 1970, only two were women. In 1968, Marilyn Pilkington became the first woman president in forty years.⁷² In contrast, over forty-two women were vice-presidents during this period.⁷³ The lack of women presidents caused one female *Gateway* writer to remark in 1963:

⁶⁶ Rich Vivone, “The Dull, Dull Leadership Race,” *Gateway*, 27 February 1968, 4.

⁶⁷ Students protesting racism at Sir George Williams University were even more radical. In 1969, students rioted and ransacked a cafeteria and computer room, protesting the slowness of a special committee that had been investigating the alleged racism of a professor. Oram, *Born at the Right Time*, 286-287.

⁶⁸ PSA was the acronym for the university’s radical Political Science, Sociology, and Anthropology Department. In response to the department’s overt radicalism, the university attempted to repress the department. Oram, *Born at the Right Time*, 246-247.

⁶⁹ Students protested against the detonation of a nuclear bomb by the Americans on the Alaskan island of Amchika. They were concerned that the blast would have far-ranging consequences such as tidal waves and earthquakes.

⁷⁰ Cartoon No Title, *Gateway*, 24 October 1969, 5.

⁷¹ Minutes of the Students’ Union, 1970-1971, 4 May 1970.

⁷² Joe Will, “Pilkington Students’ Union President by Acclamation,” *Gateway*, 23 February 1968, 1.

⁷³ Walter H. Johns, “Appendix IV, Presidents of the Students’ Union,” *A History of the University of Alberta 1908-1969* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1981), 489-490. In some instances only initials were used and in others the name could have been either male or female.

“Why let women into university at all if arbitrary limitations and medieval attitudes are going to hold them down anyway?”⁷⁴ Moreover, the issues of campus politics were also divided along gender lines. During the 1960s and 1970s, women students formed and challenged gender ideals by participating in the women’s liberation movement. Throughout Canada, many women students began to agitate for change. For example, at the University of Toronto, they formed an organisation, the New Left Committee, in 1967 to protest against male chauvinism, and at Simon Fraser University, women formed a society that offered abortion referral and counselling.⁷⁵ Support for the women’s liberation at the University of Alberta manifested itself in several ways. The editor of the *Gateway* in 1971 ridiculed an anonymous student who wrote “Women’s liberation, no! – they’re inferior anyway” by responding with “read this goody from some chickenshit male chauvinist.”⁷⁶ My interviewees were not radical feminists but they all had views on women’s liberation. Jane*, for instance, a student during the early 1970s, remembers that seeing American feminist Gloria Steinem on television gave her a “whole new way of thinking” about women’s right to equal pay and their role in the home.⁷⁷ Helen H. also began university in the early 1970s and like Jane* recalled the impact of “burning the bra” and of Gloria Steinem: “I felt we were equal and that I should have the same opportunities as men. And rather than looking at it as a male/female issue, ... it was looking at it as a individual issue, a person issue.”⁷⁸

Not everyone, women included, unconditionally accepted women who sought to redefine their gender roles through the women’s liberation movement. An advertisement for the Edmonton Student Movement in 1969 said that the women’s liberation movement was unnecessary.⁷⁹ Other students completely rejected women’s liberation. A male student in science claimed that its goal was for women to become male and that women who were “liberated” did not “have a maternal bone in their body as women were willing to sacrifice their children in order to ‘liberate’ themselves.”⁸⁰ Neither did the women’s liberation movement unite all women either, as some raised their voices in criticism. For

⁷⁴ Anne Geddes, “Red Tape and Feminine Freedoms,” *Gateway*, 15 March 1963, 4.

⁷⁵ Alison Prentice et al., *Canadian Women: A History* (Toronto: Harcourt Brace Canada, 1996), 421.

⁷⁶ “Women’s Lib, No!,” *Gateway*, 25 February 1971, 11.

⁷⁷ Jane*, interview.

⁷⁸ Helen H., interview by author, tape recording, Edmonton, Alberta, 29 March 2001.

⁷⁹ “Short Shorts,” *Gateway*, 31 October 1969, 2.

⁸⁰ Bill Klaus, “To All Liberated Women,” *Gateway*, 30 January 1970, 8.

instance, a third-year arts student argued that men were also oppressed. Not only did a woman have first rights to children in divorce, she said, but a man was also at the mercy of his wife since he was responsible for “her bills and ...all the children she has.” In fact, men were doubly cursed since courts often favoured the “poor helpless wife. Groan,” while men who faced physical or mental cruelty gained little sympathy. The student concluded that a husband was oppressed by his wife as “she calls the shots and he jumps or else.”⁸¹

Even within the women’s movement, there were differing views. The next two examples, one about daycare and the other about equality, demonstrate the ambiguous nature of the women’s movement in which women accepted some tenets and rejected others. During the 1970s, daycare, driven by the fact that more students were parents, emerged as an important cause within the women’s liberation movement at the University of Alberta. Some students like my interviewees, did not pay much attention to daycare. Women like Helen H. and Jane* did not really think about daycare as it did not personally affect them.⁸² Yet daycare was an issue for many other students. At the University of Alberta, in 1969, there were 1000 preschool children with at least one parent who was a student on campus. The issue of whether or not the university should provide a daycare polarized both female and male students. Robin (1967-73) recalls that

It [daycare and women’s liberation] wasn’t the kind of thing that you would discuss really openly unless you were quite sure of how the other person stood ... those issues were really polarized. And so you were very careful about who you talked to about them.⁸³

In 1969, a male student contended that “women can’t get both knowledge and family” because while men just needed education, women also needed daycare, and in his view, women should not be able to “have their cake and eat it too.”⁸⁴ A rebuttal the following week illustrated the divergent responses to daycare, when another student said that she was “ashamed that a fellow arts student ... ha[d] such a selfish viewpoint” about daycare

⁸¹ Geraldine Sicard, “Is It Oppression of Women? She Calls the Shots – He Jumps,” *Gateway*, 20 November 1969, 5.

⁸² Helen H., interview; and Jane*, interview.

⁸³ Robin, interview.

⁸⁴ Tom Peterson, “Women Can’t Get Both,” *Gateway*, 18 November 1969, 6.

issues.⁸⁵ Discussions about daycare continued into the 1970s. One woman argued that women needed care facilities for children, not because women wanted to work but because they had to and that it was “ignorant to say that the only good mother is the one who spends all day, everyday in the home.”⁸⁶ The debates on daycare illustrated the inconsistency in the women’s liberation movement, while the male student disputed daycare based on the issue of equality, the female one did not, rather asked for change because of women had no choice but to work.

The second example to demonstrate the lack of consensus in what was meant by and wanted from women’s liberation concerns equality. “No Man is My Master” was a satirical cartoon published in the *Gateway* in the early 1970s. Its title captured part of the essence of what women hoped to achieve with the women’s liberation movement: to have women gain independence from their subordinate role in society. Yet ultimately the title, as well as its contents, mocked women’s attempts to change attitudes. The comic depicted a young woman seduced by the women’s movement, whose promises of equality prompted her to leave her domineering boyfriend. However, she discovered that she was unhappy with the “modern” man who did not treat her like a lady. Not only did he not open doors for her or pay for her dinner, but he was also effeminate compared to her muscular, handsome former boyfriend. In the end, she decided that “female freedom isn’t about dates – or romance! It’s for job equality – and things like that,” and returned to her strong “me, Tarzan ... you, Jane” man.⁸⁷ The author of the cartoon illustrated how women picked and chose various aspects of women’s liberation as the woman depicted displayed contradictions, accepting inequality in her personal life but insisting upon equality in her professional life.

Through campus politics, students demonstrated that gender did not always concern them. At other times gender did matter, and with the development of the women’s liberation movement in the late 1960s, ideas about gender and the way in which students constructed or reasserted their gender roles came to the forefront. Women students, however, were not a cohesive group. Activist women redefined what it meant to

⁸⁵ “Daycare and Ellen Singleton Defended,” *Gateway*, 20 November 1969, 4.

⁸⁶ Laura Fisher, “Women’s Liberation,” *Gateway*, 5 February 1970, 5.

⁸⁷ Stan Lee, “No Man is My Master,” *Gateway*, 4 February 1971, 6-7. First published in *My Love* (New York: Magazine Management, 1971).

be a woman, yet not all women equally embraced the movement. Many women students at the University of Alberta accepted some aspects of it while rejecting others.

Another integral aspect of women's re-evaluation of their gender roles involved what was considered acceptable behaviour in their social and sexual lives. For example, in 1958, a group of women students decided that they wanted equal access to the games room, arguing that they felt "unwelcome" whenever they entered the room and that women who wanted to play pool should be able to do so without discrimination.⁸⁸ Responses to the women's demand, however, demonstrated that not everyone was agreeable to women invading a domain that was viewed as being predominantly male. The following week, a student's letter about women playing pool appeared; a second year engineering student was offended by the "false" accusation of discrimination and that "aside from the fact that pool is considered a man's game, did it ever occur to the house committee that girls may not want to play pool."⁸⁹ The cartoon accompanying the letter asked: "Are we going to let this happen to our girls?!!" The cartoon showed eight young women around a pool table, smoking cigarettes and looking rather provocative. One woman wore a beret and a low-cut dress and had a tattoo, while another had short hair and Band-Aids on her face.⁹⁰ These visual representations of women and their fashions suggested that women who played pool combined a lack of femininity with flaunting sexuality. Their provocative dress suggested that pool, a "man's game," made women loose. Paradoxically, the cartoon portrayed women as losing their femininity: they wore pants and smoked like men – and even fought like men, as the bandages implied.

Another way in which women challenged their defined gender roles was to reject the earlier fashions, as clothing became an extension of self.⁹¹ During the 1950s, clothing was more conservative, reflecting the conservative nature of Albertan and Canadian society. Most female students at the University of Alberta wore mid-calf-length skirts and short-sleeved sweaters, while men wore blazers and ties. According to American historian, Elaine Tyler May, women's clothing in the 1950s reflected a quasi-Victorian

⁸⁸ "Girls Get Pool," *Gateway*, 17 January 1958, 1.

⁸⁹ Norm Archer, "Pool For Girls," *Gateway*, 21 January 1958, 2.

⁹⁰ "Are We Going To Let This Happen To Our Girls," *Gateway*, 21 January 1958, 2.

⁹¹ Mainstream society did not easily accept these changes. In some places in Canada, males with long hair were threatened, harassed and even jailed. Similarly, women who wore dresses above the knee or slacks to school could be suspended. O'ram, *Born at the Right Time*, 193.

style. The long, wide skirts, crinolines, frills, girdles, stays, and padded bras to highlight their bust lines and curves mirrored the social ideal of “containment.”⁹² After the Second World War, North American society wanted peace and in order to achieve this they attempted to restrain the threat of communism at home. Conservative fashions of the 1950s were an extension of this goal as they emphasised social conformity and respectability.⁹³ Although women students at the University of Alberta favoured skirts, on casual occasions they might wear slacks. The women pictured in the 1953 *Evergreen and Gold*, for example, wore slacks at times when they were more practical, such as for curling or skating, outdoor events, and other extracurricular activities. As such, few people wore clothing that deviated from the standards.⁹⁴ Both men and women had different views on each other’s fashion and appearance. Some male students thought that short hair on a woman was attractive, while others associated women’s femininity and sexuality with long hair, and without it, they were unappealing. Women were not silent of their ideals of men’s appearance either as they reported that men’s pants were too long and that they disliked the “ugly nicotine stains” that appeared on men’s fingers from smoking. As well, they thought that men needed to maintain clean-cut hairstyles, because those who had longer hair and were unshaven looked as though they had “just c[o]me in from the bush.”⁹⁵ Both men and women attempted to define gender norms following the status quo and by identifying what they thought the opposite sex should look like and act like.

In contrast, many of the fashions of the late 1960s and 1970s rejected the informal yet neat look of the fifties and the overt signs of concealed femininity by becoming more androgynous as more women wore slacks. Not everyone approved of women wearing slacks. Dean Sparling, as mentioned, preferred that women wear skirts, even miniskirts. Many women students at the University of Alberta, however, rejected the notion that slacks were unacceptable. Responding to an earlier article, “On Idiot Fashions,” one co-ed student demanded that men “[c]ome down out of the clouds. Girls and slacks (or girls

⁹² Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era*, (New York: Basic Books, 1988), 112.

⁹³ Owram, *Born at the Right Time*, 194.

⁹⁴ *Evergreen and Gold* (1953), 133, 132, 143, 175.

⁹⁵ “Complaints,” *Gateway*, 8 October 1954, 8.

in slacks) are here to stay.”⁹⁶ Another letter of support suggested that if a man wore a “sweater and skirt, nylons, girdle (optional), and stylish but fat shoes” in cold winter conditions the authors of the letter would “consent to wear the ‘standard co-ed outfit’ ... If not, wearing slacks to classes shall NOT cease.”⁹⁷ As well, a 1967 *Gateway* cartoon showed two genderless students with short hair wearing pants and sweatshirts, with a caption reading: “What do you mean ‘are you taking engineering?’ I’m a girl.”⁹⁸ The cartoon exemplified that although women’s fashions changed, attitudes about women’s place in society did not. While the drawing demonstrated that the changing fashions made it harder to identify the sex of a person, the caption, depending on its interpretation, either reinforced or criticized the idea that women should still remain in their accepted faculties and not stray into non-traditional areas such as engineering.

Other late 1960s and 1970s fashions included army jackets, bleached jeans, bare feet and sandals, long skirts, short boots and mini skirts, which were “now the rule, not the exception.”⁹⁹ Miniskirts, unlike slacks, did not reject women’s femininity, rather they enhanced it and highlighted women’s sexuality. One co-ed reported that she liked to wear miniskirts, but her mother hated them. Another claimed that she wore them to “hustle men,” and yet another stated that since mini-skirts attracted men, she would not wear them often because she was “afraid to.”¹⁰⁰ Wearing mini-skirts challenged accepted norms; mini-skirts were the height of sexuality, revealing women’s legs, their femininity, and their sexual attractiveness while also rejecting the notion that women should be prim and proper. The re-evaluation and acceptance of gender roles can be glimpsed through a study of the fashions of the twenty-five year period of this study. Women demanded the right to wear slacks, even though some women perceived them as being unfeminine. Clothing, like other aspects of social changes, reflected the ways in which women negotiated their femininity by both accepting and rejecting change. Mini-skirts, unlike

⁹⁶ S.G., “Girls to Stay,” *Gateway*, 8 February 1963, 6. An earlier article argued against undergraduate women students dressing both too formally (they looked like prostitutes in cocktail dresses and beehives) and too informally (they had “fat bums in bell bottoms and fat legs in ballet pants.”). See “On Idiot Fashions,” *Gateway*, 1 February 1963, 4.

⁹⁷ Maggie Smit et al., “Another Contest,” *Gateway*, 8 February 1963, 6.

⁹⁸ “What Do You Mean,” *Gateway*, 2 November 1967, 5.

⁹⁹ Sue Jarvis, “Hey Your Ma Dresses You Funny,” *Gateway*, 3 October 1968, C4-5.

¹⁰⁰ Fitzgerald, “Love Those Lovely Minis,” 8.

slacks, reinforced women's womanliness, yet both slacks and mini-skirts demonstrated women's control over their own sexuality.

Women also created new gender ideals by expanding their sexual identity. During the 1950s, lack of birth control hampered women who wanted to express their sexuality. Pregnancy, the result of sexual intercourse, was difficult for both the man and the woman. In 1958, one young student threatened to commit suicide by jumping off the radio tower at the Administration Building because he thought that his girlfriend was pregnant. He only came down from the tower after his girlfriend "assured him that she was not pregnant after all. He stopped momentarily about 30 feet up to ask her 'Honest Injun?'"¹⁰¹ However, for women, pregnancy was even more difficult. In the case above, the male partner attempted to flee his responsibility and leave his girlfriend to face the possible pregnancy alone. Eva, a commerce student from 1956 to 1959, remembers that pregnant, unmarried women had few choices:

There were accidents and weddings that came out of the blue. There were more likely to be weddings if the woman was pregnant. At the time of university, an unmarried pregnant girl taking classes just wasn't...I can't think of one case where a girl would have stayed in university if she became pregnant as a single woman. They had to withdraw from their studies.¹⁰²

Similarly, Eva recalls that although sex might be discussed among friends

sexual education was practically non-existent in the schools...it was pervasive in the community. It was certainly not open, we lived in a censorship world. Movies were censored. These kinds of issues were never openly discussed.¹⁰³

In the early 1960s, students began redefining their attitudes about sex as discussions of sex were more frequent in the campus newspaper's editorials and letters to the editor. In 1962, the *Gateway*'s letter section, headlined: "Sex, Kennedy, Ban-the Bomb, All Noted by Alert Editor."¹⁰⁴ Students debated the morality or immorality of premarital sexual intercourse. "Christians and Sex," a letter to the editor written by a student, argued against premarital sex saying that both Christ and St. Paul had been against it, thus Christians must say no to pre-marital sex.¹⁰⁵ The response in the following issue argued that quoting scripture would help to solve the moral dilemma of

¹⁰¹ "Persuasion Stops Attempted Plunge," *Gateway*, 15 November 1958, 12.

¹⁰² Eva, interview.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ "Sex, Kennedy, Ban-the Bomb," *Gateway*, 9 November 1962, 6.

¹⁰⁵ EBP, "Christians and Sex," *Gateway*, 17 November 1964, 5.

premarital intercourse.¹⁰⁶ The frequency of discussions about sex prompted Dean Sparling, upon her retirement, to remark, that over her tenure the campus had changed as only a few years ago all the students had talked about was sex, even though she never knew “how much they did about it.”¹⁰⁷

Re-evaluating their sexual roles also meant that by the late 1960s and early 1970s, more women had premarital sexual intercourse and even those who did not, came to approve the idea of pre-marital sex. In the 1950s, one woman interviewed had friends who “were really quite sexually active at time when it wasn’t ... acceptable.”¹⁰⁸ Yet, by the mid-1960s, Wilkinson’s Lister Hall study discovered that students in residence had sexual experience in both necking and petting. Few had actually had sex though since 85.3 per cent of males and 83.7 per cent of females surveyed had not engaged in penetrative sexual intercourse. Homosexuality, however, was even more rare as 98.1 per cent of males and 98.4 per cent of females claimed that they had never had homosexual relations.¹⁰⁹ However, by the time Robin attended university in from 1967 to 1973, norms had changed even more so that “if you were truly committed to somebody with whom you were married or not sexual intercourse was okay. But that you don’t hop in and out of bed with people just to be with people ... that’s not the way of attracting people to you. Sex is a long-winding path.”¹¹⁰ In a 1970 *Gateway* editorial, the author asserted that “most of girls on this campus [were] not exactly puritanical” of 923 first-year women students interviewed by the author, only 275 reported that they were still “intact” before frosh week, after frosh week, only fourteen remained virtuous.¹¹¹ While the validity of the study is undeterminable, the article’s open discussion about sexual attitudes reveals that opinions about sexual intercourse were changing and that if the report is to be believed at all that more women were engaging in premarital sex.

¹⁰⁶ Moderate, “Bible Solves Moral Problems,” *Gateway*, 24 November 1964, 5.

¹⁰⁷ “Mrs. Sparling Quitting as Dean of Women,” *Gateway*, 9 February 1968, 5.

¹⁰⁸ Eva, interview.

¹⁰⁹ Wilkinson, “Residence,” 164. An American study reported in the *Gateway* in 1965 found that three fourths or more of American unmarried college women were virgins. When women did have sex, premarital intercourse was usually restricted to future husbands, and few were promiscuous. The report also stated that petting, intercourse among engaged couples, and early marriage, were some of the most common behaviours found among students. “Inhibited College Virgins Not Rare – Researcher,” *Gateway*, 26 February 1965, 1.

¹¹⁰ Robin, interview.

¹¹¹ Berry Wes Gateway, “Editorial,” *Gateway*, 1 October 1970, 5.

However, despite changing values Wilkinson found in his 1966 study that 60 per cent of males wanted to marry a virgin while only 42 per cent of men thought that men should be virgins. Eighty-one per cent of women thought that they should be virgins when they married and only 52 per cent of women believed that their husband should be one. Nonetheless, Wilkinson also revealed that women engaged more frequently in the sexual activities of petting and necking than their male counterparts, and in sex, just a bit less.¹¹² However, even in sexual matters, women revealed the paradoxical nature of the social changes of the 1960s and 1970s. In the 1950s, women's chastity was idealised but by the latter period discussed sexual norms had changed somewhat. Sexual intercourse for women outside of marriage became more acceptable, yet many women such as Robin and those in Lister Hall in the mid-1960s continued to believe that they should either wait until marriage or for a committed relationship.¹¹³

Medical advancements also helped women to expand sexual norms. In the late 1960s, Dr. Vant suggested that women who were interested in taking the Pill seek out medical advice as it had been available to women since the early 1960s and to women at the University of Alberta since 1964. Nonetheless, the sale and dissemination of birth control information was not legalized until 1969.¹¹⁴ Although women could obtain the Pill from Student Health Services, it was only given to them for medical reasons and had as of November 1964, had only been prescribed three times, each time to regulate menstrual cycle.¹¹⁵ Outside of university, physicians usually prescribed the Pill to married women.¹¹⁶ Similarly, at the University of Alberta, only students who needed it for a medical reason or those who were married or wives of students could get a prescription for the Pill. The university, however, did not supply the drug and women had to get the prescription filled elsewhere.¹¹⁷ The limited availability of the birth control method

¹¹² Wilkinson, "Residence," 206.

¹¹³ Later studies performed in American universities found that sexual mores for women had continued to evolve in the 1970s. One 1977 study that 73 per cent of college women reported that they had engaged in premarital sex, while another in 1978 found that women students were more sexually active than men students. Joseph Katz, "Past and Future of the Undergraduate Woman," in *The Challenge of Change: Perspectives on Family, Work, and Education*, ed. Matina Horner, Carol C. Nadelson, and Malkah T. Notman (New York and London: Plenum Press, 1983), 268.

¹¹⁴ Prentice, *Canadian Women*, 381.

¹¹⁵ "The Pill Available From SHS," *Gateway*, 20 November 1964, 8.

¹¹⁶ Prentice, *Canadian Women*, 381.

¹¹⁷ Mirian McClellan, "Health Service Hasn't Got Pill," *Gateway*, 21 November 1967, 1.

caused students across Canada to challenge the law. In 1965, the Canadian Union of Students decided to support the distribution of birth control from the Student Health Services.¹¹⁸ The University of Toronto announced its support for birth control in 1967, and the University of McGill illegally published the *Birth Control Handbook* in 1968.¹¹⁹

Students at the University of Alberta were more reserved in their support. While the Wauneita Society accepted the principle of distributing a birth control booklet, it agreed to do so only when it became legal.¹²⁰ The Students' Union was similarly ambivalent. When the University of Toronto's Students' Union agreed to support birth control, the Vice President of the Student Union at the University of Alberta responded that although he personally supported birth control, "this council has no stand ... [the] matter has never been brought before it."¹²¹ Likewise, the Students' Union treasurer, Phil Ponting, stated that he did not believe that birth control was "a matter of direct student concern." To appease students who wanted discussions about birth control, Ponting suggested that the university hold a teach-in (seminar) to discuss birth control since it was a matter that a student must "decide between himself and the society in which he lives."¹²² However, the teach-in, which was held in the following semester, was not one on birth control. Rather, the Family Service Association of Edmonton "offer[ed] the next best thing" – six lectures on "education for marriage" for those students who were "planning wedlock."¹²³ Some women challenged the accepted norms about sexual behaviour, demanding access and information on birth control; the Students' Union, however, lagged behind and encouraged women, by its reluctance to endorse birth control, to be married before they had sexual intercourse.

Students took matters into their own hands, and, in 1968, the Student Committee on the Status of Women set up a birth control booth in the Students' Union Building. Of the five pamphlets (discussing issues like venereal diseases and birth control methods), only three had been approved by the Students' Union. Despite 1000 signatures in favour of the booth, the Students' Union did not endorse it, granting permission for the booth on

¹¹⁸ "CUS Backs Birth Control," *Gateway*, 29 September 1965, 10.

¹¹⁹ "U of T Supports Birth Control," *Gateway*, 29 September 1967, 1; and Prentice, *Canadian Women*, 389-390.

¹²⁰ Wauneita Minutes, 8 May 1968 and 30 April 1969.

¹²¹ "U of T Supports Birth Control," 1.

¹²² *Ibid.*

¹²³ "Seminars Offered for Students Planning Wedlock," *Gateway*, 2 February 1968, 5.

the condition that Student Committee would not discuss birth control methods.¹²⁴ By the 1970s, however, the Canadian government had legalized birth control and the position of the Students' Union now changed to pro-birth control. They even had booklets. For example, in 1971, the council reported that it had several thousand Birth Control Handbooks to distribute.¹²⁵ The slowness of the Students' Union at the University of Alberta to become involved with the issue of birth control reflected the conservative nature of many of the university's students. At other Canadian universities, students and the student governments were willing to risk breaking the law, but at the University of Alberta, the Students' Union remained law abiding and waited until the laws were changed before distributing birth control information.

The women interviewed for this study did not really think about the issue of abortion during their time at the university. Lynn (1968-71) recalls that abortion was not an option; women who became pregnant usually married and left university.¹²⁶ Likewise, abortion was not an issue for others who attended university after Lynn. Jane* and Helen H., both students during the early 1970s, did not really think about abortion or pay much attention to it.¹²⁷ Nonetheless, by the early 1970s, discussions about abortion became increasingly public with the student newspaper and Students' Union debating the issue. The Women's Liberation club pushed the Students' Union to support abortion. Yet, they faced strong opposition by some of the Students' Union representatives. In early 1971, the Women's Liberation asked the Students' Union for money for a conference; their request was not granted. One member of the council argued against giving the Women's Liberation club money because women's "libbers" were a minority at the university. Moreover, the member contended that the Students' Union should not spend money on "inhumane minorities" who "advocate murder." The vote in favour of the club failed as four men and one woman voted for the motion, nine men and nine women voted against it, and two men abstained from the vote.¹²⁸ This was not the last that the SU heard from the women "libbers." In October 1971, Women's Liberation members complained to the SU council that the Students' Union financial board had discriminated against them when

¹²⁴ "Birth Control Booth Livens Up SUB," *Gateway*, 16 February 1968, 1.

¹²⁵ Records of the Students' Union, Council Minutes, 1971-72, 8 May 1971, UAA, Accession 73-22.

¹²⁶ Lynn, interview.

¹²⁷ Jane*, interview and Helen H., interview.

¹²⁸ Council Minutes, 1970-71, 25 January 1971, Acc. 73-22.

they had requested money for an abortion conference. The women claimed that this prejudice had prevented the board from granting them money.¹²⁹ Even though they were not granted money in October, the Women's Liberation tried again in November, requesting \$100 to protest abortion laws. Since money had already been granted to the group for a women's week, the request was denied.¹³⁰ In the late 1960s, Dean Sparling, however, questioned the idea that women could be freed by contraceptives or abortion, rather she asserted that the "elevation of a culture in which their special talents are at a premium" would lead to new liberties for women.¹³¹ Contraceptives and abortion emancipated women sexually and thus helped them redefine the way in which they lived their lives. Women could have sex and worry less about becoming pregnant. Yet, not all women whole-heartedly endorsed sexuality and birth control. The Dean of Women remained reserved and doubtful, while university women students accepted aspects of free love and birth control; only some, however, like the women "libbers," actively promoted abortion and birth control.

Between 1950 and 1975, women worked within existing roles to broaden them. Women helped to re-create perceptions about their gender and sexuality by drawing upon mainstream ideals and the university's opinion about women's social roles within society. By readjusting their attitudes about lifestyle, politics, residence, and sexuality, they developed a new image of womanhood, blending old ideas with new and constructing new possibilities for women.

¹²⁹ Records of the Students' Union, Council Minutes, 1971-72, 18 October 1971, UAA, Acc. 78-127.

¹³⁰ Council Minutes, 1971-72, 12 November 1971, Acc. 73-22.

¹³¹ Dean of Women, Dean of Women's Report to the Royal Commission for the Status of Women, UAA, Acc. 70-168-67.

Chapter 4

The Construction of Gender in Extracurricular Activities by the University and Male and Female Undergraduate Students

It soon became obvious that University was to be something besides academic learning. We won't forget the Wauneita formal, the Latin Quarter, the Drama's Club's "Alice in Wonderland," the Mixed Chorus concert and the Sunday evening Musicales.¹

Shirley Stinson, class historian of 1953, articulated how significant extracurricular activities were to University of Alberta students, providing enjoyment and memories not gained in the classroom. Almost every student participated in some form of extracurricular activity, whether it was being an executive member of a club or simply going out for pizza with friends. Through structured and unstructured social interactions that occurred both on and off campus, women shaped their communities at university. While off campus and unstructured activities were important, women's construction of community and gender roles were seen most distinctly on campus and in organised activities – women's sports, queen contests, female fraternities and the Wauneita Society. Here, women used membership, language, and rules of accepted behaviour to create and reinforce their own ideas of community, as well as to define what was proper for their sex and what was not. During the 1950s, women's participation in clubs and activities continued to follow earlier patterns, but by the 1960s and 1970s, women began to alter their attitudes about their world and the ways in which they participated in campus activities. However, despite change, women's participation in fraternities, queen contests, sports, and the Wauneita Society reflected continued adherence, at least on the part of some students, to an ideal of "graciousness" and womanly womanhood.

Women formed their communities on the basis of both unstructured and structured social interaction. It is impossible to say whether the interviewees for this study were representative of the general female student population at the University of Alberta, but this particular group of women favoured unstructured activities such as going to movies or out for coffee and pizza with friends. Lynn, a nursing student who attended the university from 1966 to 1971, remembers that she "used to go skiing lots. Downhill skiing with this girl in my class and her brother ... we went on lots of skiing trips. Not so

¹ Shirley Stinson, "Class History," University of Alberta yearbook, *Evergreen and Gold* (1953), 45.

much at first year, but in the second year, we'd go to Banff and all share a room...so I did lots of skiing. I just did what the other kids did.”² In the 1970s, after the legal drinking age had been lowered from twenty-one to eighteen, Helen H., a science student and later an education student, remembers going to house parties and bars.³ Lynn's articulation of her activities probably reflected the view of community that most young people had: she wanted to “fit in with the crowd ... to be the same as everybody else [and not] ... to be different.”⁴

Women like Lynn and Helen H., both of whom had gone to high school in Edmonton, tended to remain close to their high school friends. In contrast, women from outside of Edmonton had to forge new bonds. Their high school friends did not necessarily join them at university, and in any case they simply did not enjoy the same proximity to their old social networks as women who lived in the city. Consequently, non-Edmonton residents, especially, looked towards university residences in which they lived, and/or the clubs they joined, or their classmates for friendship. Mary*, a nursing student from 1959 to 1965, recalls that she did

a lot of things with the residence or in residence, because they had all kinds of activities that were there and available if you wanted to partake in those. We used to go to University dances. We used to socialize with engineers, for instance, because they were a large group of males and knew where there were a lot of females so they would call and invite nurses to come to their parties. I was thinking about this today, I was primarily partying.⁵

Similarly, Margaret reports that people from residence and fellow nurses comprised her circle of friends. Mary and Margaret's stories illustrate several points. Not only did their residence provide them with a myriad of activities but also the women within their school of nursing helped form their social community. My interviewees also took part in structured activities, although they were much less popular than unstructured activities.

² Margaret, interview by author, tape recording, Edmonton, Alberta, 17 March 2001; and Lynn, interview by author, tape recording, Edmonton, Alberta, 13 February 2001.

³ Helen H., interview by author, tape recording, Edmonton, Alberta, 29 March 2001.

⁴ Lynn, interview by author, tape recording, Edmonton, Alberta, 13 February 2001.

⁵ Mary* is a pseudonym. Mary*, interview by author, tape recording, Edmonton, Alberta, 6 March 2001.

Margaret joined the Anglican Youth Organisation in Edmonton, while Cathy, for example, a home economics/education student in the late 1960s, joined a dance club.⁶

The ways in which women constructed their communities and identities both by accepting and challenging gender ideals can be seen most distinctly through their participation in women-only activities on campus. The focus of this chapter will be the Wauneita Society, to which all undergraduate female students automatically belonged, and women's fraternities, which were selective in their membership, because as structured social clubs they reflect notion of belonging and rituals best. Nonetheless, women's sports and queen contests are included in the discussion because they demonstrate another dimension to the complex picture of women's lives, illustrating both change and continuity in women's gender roles during the period 1950 and 1975. The Wauneita Society was a women's organisation at the University of Alberta, founded by the first seven female students in 1909. Throughout its existence, every woman, when she registered at the University of Alberta, became a member of the society and her membership dues were included in her general Student's Union fee.⁷ While the Wauneita Society was purely a University of Alberta organisation, the concept of female social fraternities was conceived in the United States. At the University of Alberta, because Dr. H.M. Tory, the first university president, disliked secret societies, all fraternities were banned until 1929. Eventual approval was due in part to their becoming more acceptable across Canada. In 1928, both McGill University and the University of Toronto had twenty fraternal associations on their campuses.⁸ Fraternities offered housing opportunities to students, especially valuable, at a time when housing was scarce. As well, campus officials started to see fraternities as structures that promoted school spirit, behavioural conformity, friendship, and campus hierarchy – characteristics that they hoped would benefit students in the professional world.⁹ During this period, students at the University of Alberta also agitated for fraternities, demanding that the university end

⁶ Margaret, interview; and Cathy, interview by author, tape recording, Edmonton, Alberta, 25 January 2001.

⁷ Ethel C. Anderson and Agnes Wilson Treviotdale, interview by David Rageson (for CKSR "60-plus"), 1970, University of Alberta Archives (UAA), Edmonton, Alberta, Reference Information 2315-5.

⁸ Paul Axelrod, *Making a Middle Class: Student Life in English Canada During the Thirties* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1990), 106.

⁹ Ibid.

its ban.¹⁰ Once the ban was lifted, four female fraternities appeared: Alpha Upsilon, Psi Omega, Phi Gamma, and Nu Lambda.¹¹ These local fraternities then sought affiliation with American fraternities, so that by 1931 the original fraternities had become Pi Beta Phi, Kappa Alpha Theta, Delta Delta Delta and Delta Gamma.¹² Throughout the period of the 1950s to the 1970s, the women's fraternities remained affiliated with American fraternities, using governance and rituals that shared a common American origin. However, while much of the fraternity life was American based or influenced, each fraternity at the University of Alberta had its own local philanthropy. For example, during the 1969-70 school year, Pi Beta Phi promoted literacy, while Alpha Gamma Delta supported cerebral palsy, Delta Gamma the blind, and Kappa Alpha Theta the Logaoedics Institute.¹³

Sports and queen contests, on the other hand, had little traditional club structure. Sports had two streams: intramural sports in which women from different clubs and faculties competed against each other, and intervarsity sports teams which played against other universities. For example, in 1961, intervarsity sports for women included golf, tennis, badminton, skating, curling, fencing, bowling, volleyball, and basketball.¹⁴ In 1944, intervarsity basketball for women received a new name, the Pandas; this name soon became the term used to identify all women's intervarsity team sports such as volleyball.¹⁵ During the 1920s, female sports had garnered newspaper coverage and large crowds, but in the 1930s, interest waned as the Depression encouraged a return to more restrictive attitudes about women and sports.¹⁶ This trend continued into the 1940s and 1950s, so that by the 1960s and 1970s, women's sports were underattended and underfunded. Both women's sports and queen contests encouraged women's grace and

¹⁰ Walter H. Johns, *A History of the University of Alberta, 1908-1969* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1981), 114-115

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 199-200.

¹² *Evergreen and Gold* (1932), 185-188. In 1959, Delta Delta Delta closed its local chapter at the University of Alberta, while the Alpha Gamma Delta Fraternity opened in 1964. "Tri-Delta Sorority to Discontinue Chapter," *Gateway*, 29 February 1959, 1; and "Girl Greek Group Dedicated by U of A Representatives," *Gateway*, 9 October 1964, 3.

¹³ Records of the Office of the Dean of Women, Panhellenic Council, Panhellenic Council Year-end Report to Committee on Fraternities and Residential Clubs, 1969-70, UAA, Acc. 73-22-13.

¹⁴ *Evergreen and Gold* (1961), 186-187, 194-198, 203, 205-208.

¹⁵ Johns, *A History of the University of Alberta*, 202; and *Evergreen and Gold* (1964), 195.

¹⁶ Helen Lenskyj, *Out of Bounds: Women, Sport, and Sexuality* (Toronto: Women's Press, 1986), 67. Also see, Lissa Smith, ed., *Nike is a Goddess: The History of Women in Sports* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1998) for articles dealing with women and sport in North America.

beauty. Traditional female sports such as figure skating taught women balance, dexterity, pose, and grace, while at the same time, the degree of fitness required by these sports resulted in and led to the expectation of a “body beautiful.”¹⁷ Similarly, queen contests promoted the ideal of grace and beauty. Queen contests and sports demanded women have a perfect body; however, women who participated in contests were expected to possess these attributes, while women in sports had to develop them.

Queen contests at the University of Alberta flourished in the post-war period until the 1970s. Few examples of queen contests appear in the *Evergreen and Gold*, the university yearbooks, in the late 1930s and early 1940s, but by the late 1940s and onwards, as women’s gender roles were reinforced, queen contests became prominent features both in the yearbook and the student newspaper, the *Gateway*.¹⁸ Their popularity is reflected in the many departments and organisations that hosted queen contests. In 1964, there were four annual queen contests: the Education Queen, the Engineering Queen, Queen of the Golden Bowl, crowned at the annual sports awards and banquet dinner, and Miss Freshette, sponsored by Block A, the university’s outstanding athletes.¹⁹ By 1967, there were even more contests. Besides the aforementioned, there was also Miss IFC, sponsored by the Interfraternity Council (IFC), a student group which consisted of representatives from every male fraternity on campus, Miss University, and Miss International, a queen contest which had representatives from different countries.²⁰ The contests were condoned and even presided upon by university officials. The 1964 Miss Freshette candidates were first interviewed by Dean Sparling and then judged by three professors, one woman and two men, a university graduate, and the wife of a physical education professor, Mrs. Van Vliet.²¹

Through membership, women determined who would and who would not be part of their structured community. The Wauneita Society was the most encompassing since

¹⁷ Jennifer Hargreaves, *Sporting Females: Critical Issues in the History and Sociology of Women's Sports* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), 159, 160. Also see Bruce Kidd, *The Struggle for Canadian Sport* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996); and Mary Keyes, “Women and Sport,” in *A Concise History of Sport in Canada*, ed. Don Morrow et al. (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1989) for further discussions about femininity in sport.

¹⁸ *Evergreen and Gold* (1940-1951).

¹⁹ *Evergreen and Gold* (1964), 288.

²⁰ *Evergreen and Gold* (1967), 89, 157, 107.

²¹ “Freshette Candidates Selected,” *Gateway*, 29 September 1964, 8.

every woman at the university belonged to it. Helen X., a nursing student from 1950 to 1955, recalls that the Wauneita Society was “very nice. Very welcoming and very democratic.” Participation in the society gave her a sense of belonging because it was “important for somebody coming from a small town to have a large organisation ... to make you feel like you weren’t just a very small cog in a very big wheel.”²² Other clubs and activities were more restricted in their membership, whether the criteria for belonging was athletic skills, physical appearance, ethnicity, socio-economic status, or something else. In sports, athleticism and skill contributed to who was chosen for a team. For instance, Robin, a 1973 graduate, enjoyed playing basketball, but never joined a campus team because “I wasn’t at the level that I could do it at the university.”²³ In contrast, a woman’s participation in a queen contest was based upon attractiveness. Although candidates were supposedly chosen on the basis of their personality, intelligence, and character, the *Gateway*’s presentation of the Miss Freshette contest in fall 1958 would suggest otherwise. Accompanying the candidates’ photos were the headings “Statuesque,” “That Hair,” “Coy,” “Calgary Cutie,” and “Beguiling Eyes.”²⁴ Likewise, a mid-1960s report about the candidates for Miss Freshette stressed how the “winsome freshettes” with their “dewy complexion” set the “standard and attitude ... [which said] ... the type of girl that comes to our university is something special.”²⁵

Women’s fraternities had even more stringent regulations for membership as character and appearance influenced whom the fraternity members wanted for a sister. According to Eva (1956-59), fraternities

were selective in who they let join – particular groups wanted to have like members. There was a cost to being a member, fairly hefty in some of the fraternities. So there was a social structure there and not everyone could become a member just because of the cost. And secondly, of course, [there was] the selection process - a process called blackballing and voting new members in. It certainly was not an open kind of organization.²⁶

In the 1967 fall Rush, the period during which the different fraternities met potential members, the Dean of Women, Isabel Munroe, was concerned when a young woman,

²² Helen did not want her surname used in this study so to differentiate her from Helen H., the letter X will be used in place of her surname initial; Helen X., interview by author, tape recording, Edmonton, Alberta, 12 March 2001.

²³ Robin, interview by author, tape recording, Edmonton, Alberta, 30 January 2001.

²⁴ “Miss Freshette Candidates Chosen,” *Gateway*, 30 September 1958, 1.

²⁵ “Freshette Candidates Selected,” *Gateway*, 29 September 1964, 8.

²⁶ Eva, interview by author, tape recording, Edmonton, Alberta, 28 March 2001.

described as “shy,” “introverted,” and “almost blind,” was initially rejected by all four female fraternities. When pressed, one fraternity’s alumna representative suggested that perhaps it was better that the woman was rejected now since in the long run she would not be able to share in the whole fraternity programme. Delta Gamma, not to be out done, argued that “if any fraternity should ask her, it should be ours because of our interest [philanthropy] in the sight problems.”²⁷ Dean Munroe ultimately ruled that only the fraternities themselves had the right to decide on accepting the rushee, although she advised that the “girl must not be taken in to the fraternity on a sympathy basis but as a person.”²⁸ Fraternities, however, denied discriminating against a woman’s race or religion. In 1958, after a black woman at the University of Toronto was refused entry because of her race, the fraternities at the University of Alberta rejected the idea that racism occurred at the university in their organisations.²⁹ The women’s fraternities reinforced their claim by detailing their non-British, non-Catholic members: Delta Delta Delta had a Jewish active (initiated member) and a pledge (non-initiated member), and in the past, had had a Japanese pledge; Delta Gamma had had two Jewish pledges in the past; Kappa Alpha Theta had a Jewish pledge and active, as well as a Mormon pledge; and Pi Beta Phi had had Jewish members in the past. Despite their protests of tolerance, Delta Gamma, probably in reference to their secret rituals, asserted that an active would need to accept some Christian principles if they joined a fraternity.³⁰ Nonetheless, according to Eva, some discrimination occurred, but mainly with respect to policies imposed on the local fraternity by its central office in the United States:

I wasn’t a – I’m embarrassed to tell you – I wasn’t a very good fraternity member, I simply didn’t agree with a lot of the policies and a lot of the policies at that point were coming up from the United States. And their views on anti-Semitism and things like that were quite contrary to what I thought it should be.³¹

²⁷ Records of the Office of the Dean of Women, Panhellenic Records, 18 October 1967 and 19 October 1967, UAA, Acc. 77-63-71.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ “Charges of Sorority Discrimination,” *Gateway*, 20 October 1959, 1.

³⁰ Ed Wigmore, “One Bias Clause Remains,” *Gateway*, 14 November 1958, 1. The clause in the article’s title referred to restrictions in membership in a male fraternity that claimed that although it wanted to admit “all races and creeds,” the head office, which supported a discriminatory clause in the constitution, hampered it.

³¹ Eva, interview.

The Wauneita Society, women's fraternities and sports teams, and queen contests all had different requirements to define who could and who could not be members. By emphasising skill or appearance, they reinforced both the societal ideal woman and the image that they wished to foster as an organisation.

Once accepted, ritual and language helped women to create their ideal of womanhood. The use of rituals and symbols allowed the institution, whether it was a fraternity or a queen contest, to assimilate non-members into the group. It also helped women to come together to work for larger, common purposes by bonding them around a sense of unity and exclusiveness.³² Language was also significant as something women used to create a public persona of their organisations and activities; language, however, unlike rituals and symbols, was also external as other students also used language to define a club or activity.³³ Especially in the 1950s, women's verbal expression of their own activities was dissimilar to those of the other students on campus.³⁴

The Wauneita Society used both Cree and masculine symbols in its rituals to establish their identity. The 1948 Wauneita initiation demonstrates how women incorporated Cree and masculine imagery into their ceremonies. New initiates entered the Wauneita lounge and were given faggots, bundles of sticks or twigs, which supposedly were "symbols of toil" and "invested with the Order of the Blanket by Junior Chief Tanner and Senior Chief Husband." Then, the women were "pledged by Great Chief Lee to obey all the tribal laws" and went to the "great council fire" or fireplace, and there, the "Wauneita brave[s] cast [their] faggot[s] into the flames."³⁵ The 1950 newspaper gave even more information about the initiation: "New braves paraded ... to the beats of drums," and the chiefs gave them feathers, signs of "friendship and loyalty," and faggots. Another chief placed a Native-style blanket on the women's shoulders to symbolize "the ever-ready helping hand." The faggots were then cast on to a fire; this represented the

³² Sandra Haarsager, *Organised Womanhood: Cultural Politics in the Pacific Northwest, 1840-1920* (Norman and London: University of Oklahoma Press, 1997), 3, 132-133.

³³ According to historian Joan Scott, language can be used to deconstruct attitudes towards gender. She argued that written texts were no less subject to bias than oral testimonies. Thus, language and its usage could be deconstructed to potentially reveal implied meanings rather than what is stated. Joan Wallace Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 115.

³⁴ Activities, for lack of a better word, are used here to represent the Wauneita Society, women's fraternities, women's sports, and queen contests.

³⁵ Frances Schroter, "Wauneita Squaws Hold Initiation," *Gateway*, 8 October 1948, 1.

acceptance of women's responsibilities to the Society. Refreshments and a singsong followed.³⁶ What is significant is the extent to which women assumed the more masculine roles of "chief" and "brave" as well as adopting other Native symbols like feathers, fire, and drums. At the same time, women did not reject their femininity as the meaning they ascribed to these roles and symbols by stressing the feminine ideals of friendship and cooperation. Even the Wauneita name had a symbolic meaning that furthered the ideal of womanhood: its name, according to the Society, meant "kind-hearted" in Cree.

In addition, the language used by Wauneita and by other students on campus, illustrated the conflicting ways in which women and campus society constructed ideas of gender. For instance, a 1954 headline in the *Gateway* blared: "Men Beware Squaws Prowl for Pow-wow."³⁷ The article went on to warn that "no male [was] safe on the campus as all loyal Wauneita ... hunt[ed] for escorts" to the annual Wauneita Society formal dance.³⁸ This piece did two things: it used a term that when applied to a Native woman was offensive, and it placed women in the role of the aggressor, a characteristic not usually associated with women. Women, however, did not complain about these portrayals, suggesting that they saw nothing unusual with the headlines and that, perhaps, they also realised that it was more common for men to be the aggressors. Nonetheless, within their organisation, they chose powerful, masculine words, such as "braves" or "chiefs," to describe themselves.³⁹ To a Wauneita being a "brave" or a hunter did not have a negative connotation; rather, membership in the Society was a noble pursuit as it helped women to become active agents – braves or warriors – in their own lives. Although the terms "squaw" and "braves" were no longer used in the 1960s to identify Wauneita members, their use in the 1950s reflected how gender was constructed. The *Gateway* mocked women who were the aggressor, while Wauneita saw themselves in a

³⁶ Sheila McMugan, "Initiate Three Hundred Wauneita," *Gateway*, 3 October 1950, 1.

³⁷ "Men Beware Squaws Prowl for Pow-wow," *Gateway*, 14 October 1954, 4.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 4. Though it was not used in a racist meaning towards university women, the term squaw was originally a "derogatory word" used to identify Aboriginal women. In her study of Native and Metis women from 1670 to 1870, historian Sylvia Van Kirk found that as the number of European women increased in Western Canada so did the prejudice against Native and Metis women. Sylvia Van Kirk, *"Many Tender Ties": Women in the Fur-Trade Society, 1670-1870* (Winnipeg: Watson and Dwyer, 1993), 201.

³⁹ McMugan, "Initiate," 1.

dual role. On the one hand, they realised their actions at the formal were more aggressive than was normally expected from a woman, and on the other hand, they challenged ideals within their society by embracing male roles.

The interviewees had less to say on the subject of Wauneita, however. Margaret, a student from 1956 to 1961, found the Society to be staid and old fashioned and remembered that the teas and dances seemed ridiculous.⁴⁰ Mary*, a nursing student, “vaguely” recalls Wauneita as she “didn’t really have anything to do with that. I guess nursing was rather unique in that we were a group of our own.”⁴¹ While the period from 1950 to 1975 was marked by many changes, the response of the interviewees to Wauneita remained consistent; Eva (1956-59), Leda (1964-68), Lynn (1966-71), and Robin (1967-73) all had little to do with it.⁴² Lorraine, who attended university between 1962 and 1965, had the most to say about the organisation:

Oh, it was nice. I attended several of their, I don’t know what they were called, meetings. And, you know, the ceremony behind it was nice. The executive members would dress up in these costumes and there were their little songs and so forth. And it was interesting.⁴³

Not all women recognized Wauneita as a presence in their lives. Yet it was a Society that attempted to include everyone, overcoming boundaries of faculties and ethnicity, trying to influence every woman on campus with its definition of gender.

Fraternities, on the other hand, were not all encompassing, nor did they try to be. Rather, the rituals and language that fraternity women used excluded others and in its exclusion created an even tighter, more traditional view of gender. The clandestine nature of the ritual provided women with a secret that no one else knew.⁴⁴ Eva, a fraternity member, remembers being

⁴⁰ Margaret, interview.

⁴¹ Mary*, interview.

⁴² Eva, interview; Leda, interview by author, tape recording, Edmonton, Alberta, 23 January 2001; Lynn, interview; and Robin, interview by author, tape recording, Edmonton, Alberta, 30 January 2001.

⁴³ Lorraine, interview by author, tape recording, Two Hills, Alberta, 2 April 2001.

⁴⁴ Since these rituals are secret and recorded in few sources, they will not be discussed. However, Diana Beth Turk, *Bound by a Mighty Vow: Sisterhood in Kappa Alpha Theta Fraternity, 1870-1920* (Ph.D. diss., University of Maryland, 1999) does examine the rituals that occurred in the early part of the twentieth century. Since she is limited to one fraternity and her time period is earlier than mine, I was not able to generalize her findings.

sceptical of some of their practices. Well, this is kind of hypocritical being a member and being questioning – but I just was not comfortable with some of the things – the very heavy loyalty issue, the fact that blackballing took place. It only took, I think, three votes for somebody not to be accepted as a member and their only crime might have been that perhaps they were not as well-dressed as some of the others.⁴⁵

Unlike Wauneita, the initiation rites of fraternities were and still are secret. Of the three fraternity women interviewed only Eva mentioned the initiation ritual, recalling that “these initiation rights were supposed to be very serious.”⁴⁶ One ritual, used throughout the period of from 1950 to 1975, was the non-secretive “pinning” or receiving the fraternity pin of a boyfriend. The semi-ritualized pinning demonstrated that fraternities actively promoted the social ideal of marriage as being pinned was tantamount to an engagement.⁴⁷ Yet, while fraternity women embraced certain aspects of the idea such as marriage, they also rejected other aspects of proscribed gender roles. Women fraternities at the University of Alberta had traditionally used the term “fraternity” in relation to themselves.⁴⁸ Although “sorority” was the term used for most women’s fraternal organisations on other campuses, and was also found at the University of Alberta, the practice was to use “fraternity” to describe both male and female organisations. “Sorority” was first used in 1882 at Syracuse University.⁴⁹ Since the female fraternal chapters at the University of Alberta were part of larger American fraternities that traced their heritage to before the 1880s, the women at the University of Alberta maintained the word “fraternity.” Until 1958, the *Gateway* also adopted the term. However, in 1958, in what it said was an effort to conserve space and thus typing costs, the newspaper changed to “sorority.” It was first used inconspicuously in an article entitled “4 Sororities

⁴⁵ Eva, interview.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Jonah R. Churgin, *The New Woman and the Old Academe: Sexism and Higher Education* (New York: Libra Publications, 1978), 28-29. Also see Lisa Handler, “In the Fraternal Sisterhood: Sororities as Gender Strategy,” *Gender and Society* 9, 2 (1995): 237; Hank Numer, *Wrongs of Passage: Fraternities, Sororities, Hazing, and Binge Drinking* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1999); and Bonnie J. Galloway, *Evolving Sisterhood: An Organizational Analysis of Three Sororities* (Ph.D. diss., Western Michigan University, 1994) for other studies on fraternities.

⁴⁸ Initially, after the ban on fraternities was lifted and four women’s fraternities were established, they were called sororities; however, after becoming members of international fraternities, women used the term “fraternities” to refer to themselves. *Evergreen and Gold* (1930), 187-190; and *Evergreen and Gold* (1931), 4.

⁴⁹ Clyde Sanfred Johnson, *Fraternities In Our Colleges* (New York: National Interfraternity Foundation, 1972), 60.

Welcome 83 New Members.”⁵⁰ The following issue, however, recorded both the displeasure of a female fraternity member and the congratulations of a male student who liked the change. Robin McPherson, a fraternity member, argued that the newspaper should continue to employ the term “women’s fraternities” since fraternities was derived from the Greek word *phrates* or *phratritia*, meaning tribes or groups of people.⁵¹ The editor responded that this did not affect journalists, only Greek and Latin schools. He also opposed using “women’s fraternities” and “men’s fraternities” to differentiate between the two because “[t]he first term is a solecism and the second redundant. Both terms are absurd to an outside observer.”⁵² Male student Bill Somers agreed with the change, saying, “Hurray for the precedent ... Let’s face it, a ‘women’s fraternity’ is a very masculine term.”⁵³ Both the editor and Somers rejected women’s right to address their clubs in the manner that they desired, choosing a term that appeared to be more feminine. “Sorority” meant sisterhood and “fraternity” was often thought to mean “brotherhood.” Thus by using “sorority,” the male student and the *Gateway* reinforced the femininity of women’s fraternities in a way the fraternities did not want. Nonetheless, the editor also illustrated the exclusive nature of women’s fraternities. To the author, the term was “absurd” to a non-fraternity member, meaning that not only did women fraternity members at the University of Alberta construct their image of themselves, but also fraternity women demanded the right to use the terminology that they wanted, in spite of social pressure to do otherwise. At the same time, by flying in the face of convention, they enforced their exclusion from the campus around them. Despite the issue that the editor made over the word “sororities,” it never received much exposure as the *Gateway* tended to focus on male fraternities, with references to the Interfraternity Council and the idea of “brotherhood.”⁵⁴ Letters to the editors written by fraternity women usually employed the phrase of “women fraternities,” and although

⁵⁰ “4 Sororities Welcome 83 New Members,” *Gateway*, 31 October 1958, 3.

⁵¹ Robin McPherson, “Explanations,” *Gateway*, 7 November 1958, 4.

⁵² Bill Somers, “Hurray for the Precedent,” *Gateway*, 7 November 1958, 4.

⁵³ Editor, *Gateway*, 7 November 1958, 4.

⁵⁴ “Fraternities for Fun and Profit,” *Gateway*, 16 October 1964, 4; “Shy? Can’t Make It Yourself? Join a Campus Fraternity!” and “Fraternities are Active in Campus Functions,” *Gateway*, 20 September 20, 1968, 5.

editors could have made the change, women's choice of wording seemed to have been respected.⁵⁵

The presentation of sports to the general campus population also demonstrated how women and the campus understood gender roles, expanding them in the 1960s and 1970s to include images of women as aggressors in a positive light.⁵⁶ In the mid-1960s, many *Gateway* captions supported the notion that sports for women should be fun but not that sports should be aggressive. For instance, "It's All a Matter of Form" discussed women's participation in womanly sports such as synchronized swimming, while "Coed Race on Fun Course of Obstacles" emphasised the friendly cooperation of sports.⁵⁷ Women also played upon the ideal woman and her role in sports when discussing women's sports. For example, the woman's sports column asked women students: "Do you feel old age creeping up on you and want a last chance to regain your youth?" and questioned first-year students whether they felt "lost and miss[ed] the fun ... had in high school?"⁵⁸ Both images play into ideas of "proper" womanhood. The first statement fosters negative attitudes about women's aging process while the second demonstrates that women's sports were not to be aggressive but "good fun ... from keen competition."⁵⁹ Male sports, in contrast, were to be more serious and more competitive. The names, women's Pandas versus the male sports teams' Golden Bears, exemplify this difference. Pandas, for instance, are seen as much more a cuddly bear, where as Golden Bears have a much tougher connotation. The 1964 Golden Bears basketball team picture shows all the heads of the players in basketballs with a large photograph of the men actually playing basketball. On the pages devoted to the women's Panda basketball team, there are four pictures. Two small ones show the women playing basketball while the other two photographs reveal two different teams, the Pandas and the Cubs, another female basketball team at the university. In one of the team pictures, the women are

⁵⁵ "Fraternities Pounce for Heart Fund," *Gateway*, 6 March 1968, 2; and "No Obligation to Join a Frat," *Gateway*, 23 September 1969.

⁵⁶ See Barbara Stewart, "In From the Cold," Smith, *Nike is A Goddess*, 269-289. The article details the history of women's ice hockey in North America, arguing that with the interest and activity about women's ice hockey that its future looks promising.

⁵⁷ "It's All a Matter of Form" and "Coeds Race on Fun Course of Obstacles," *Gateway*, 5 November 1965, 17.

⁵⁸ "Women's Intramurals Offer Variety of Sports," *Gateway*, 3 October 1967, 7.

⁵⁹ *Evergreen and Gold* (1964), 176.

holding a cute, feminine looking Panda bear.⁶⁰ Yet those women who actually played sports often had a different image of themselves and their participation in such sporting activities. One sports woman from the early 1960s, interviewed by Kate Lamont for *"We Can Achieve": A History of Women in Sport at the University of Alberta*, asserted that although she had wanted to have fun playing sports, "winning became more important than enjoying."⁶¹ By the late 1960s and mid-1970s, the portrayal of women's sports in the campus media reflected the changing perceptions. Headlines emphasised the idea of women being more aggressive within sports and reflected the extent to which the kinds of sports they played had expanded. For instance, in January 1969, the *Gateway* reported that "Big and Little Bears Capture Titles, Pandas Fall to Role of Pushover."⁶² In this example, women were being forceful, "capturing" the victory. Nonetheless, captions for men's sports employed more active terms. Women may have won or "fall[en] to the role of pushover," but men's teams "shut out," or "dump[ed]" another team or "ran streaks."⁶³ The depiction of women's sports teams in the campus media and the way in which women viewed their own participation in sports as well as in fraternities and Wauneita sometimes differed as women emphasised their strengths rather than their weaknesses encouraging a gender role which both combined and negotiated traditional ideas of a woman.

Women not only used language, rituals, and symbols to create or re-examine ideals, but also in organisations like Wauneita and fraternities, their activities – dances, philanthropies, and programming – helped in this construction. Their dances, for instance, reversed the traditional gender dating roles. For instance, a 1951 *Gateway* headline screamed, "Girls Pay All Bills at Annual [Wauneita] Dance," while the article itself commented, "[t]he saying that a fellow needs a girl is being reversed this week into a girl needs a fellow."⁶⁴ The Wauneita formal sanctioned atypical behaviour in which women became the dominant partners, inviting men on dates and providing them with

⁶⁰ Ibid., 190-193.

⁶¹ Kate Lamont, *"We Can Achieve": A History of Women in Sport at the University of Alberta* (Edmonton: Academic Printing and Publishing, 1988), 47.

⁶² "Big and Little Bears Capture Title Pandas Fall to Role of Pushover," *Gateway*, 14 January 1969, 7.

⁶³ Ibid.; "Nuggets Shut Out Bears 4-0 In City Championship Game" and "Bearcats Run Streak to 21; Dump NAIT Oakpiks 5-1," *Gateway*, 2 February 1968, 6, 7.

⁶⁴ "Girls Pay All Bills at Annual Dance," *Gateway*, 16 October 1951, 1.

boutonnieres in the “[g]irl takes boy affair.”⁶⁵ Another inversion of the norm was the king contest sponsored in the 1950s by various women’s groups such as the Panhellenic Council and Pembina Nurses. The women would sponsor the king candidates at the annual formal of Mardi Gras, a festival that inverts norms in general.⁶⁶ In a parody of the queen contests, the candidate’s name, height, weight, mannerisms, and sports hobbies were reported.⁶⁷ By the 1960s, the Mardi Gras and its king were no longer mentioned in the pages of the yearbook, although Helen H. recalls a type of king contest did occur in the 1970s.⁶⁸

Clubwomen functioned as hostesses at campus events like football games and supported different philanthropies. Wauneita, for example, provided tutorials for Native high school students.⁶⁹ Both hostess and philanthropic work reinforced women’s domestic role. Acting as hostess was similar to acting as hostess within one’s own home, and the idea of philanthropy played into an image of womanhood developed in the early 1900s of a middle-class woman who had the leisure time to donate to charitable causes. These causes were often extensions of their domesticity, enhancing women’s role as nurturer and moral guardian. In the early 1900s, women were seen to be the moral guardians of the home as well as being the moral guardian of society. Thus they had the responsibility to reform society. The Young Women’s Christian Association (YWCA), for example, was established to provide young women, often new to the city, a safe and moral place for them to go. It was hoped the YWCA’s would prevent women from falling into the wicked vices of city life.⁷⁰ Women’s organisations at the University of Alberta also stressed the ideal by highlighting the importance of ladylike behaviour which Dean Sparling called “gracious living.” Though never explicitly defining the term, “gracious living” embodied and encouraged women to conform to the virtues of the middle class, by demanding that they adopt ideals in which women were “ladies,” always

⁶⁵ “Girl Takes Boy Affair,” *Gateway*, 17 October 1958, 1.

⁶⁶ “To Crown King Sat,” *Gateway*, 2 February 1951, 2.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 2; An inversion, however, pre-supposes the idea that it parodies. Therefore, girl asking boy and male king contests were acceptable because mainstream society recognized that they were inversions that did not threaten social order. Stuart Clark, “Inversion, Misrule and the Meaning of Witchcraft,” *Past and Present*, 87 (1980): 103.

⁶⁸ Helen H., interview by author, tape recording, Edmonton, Alberta, 29 March 2001.

⁶⁹ Records of the Wauneita Society, Indian Tutoring Program, UAA, Acc. 77-63-61.8.

⁷⁰ Prentice, *Canadian Women*, 197.

courteous and well behaved. Wauneita even offered talks in the early 1960s on “graciousness in university living.”⁷¹ The lectures implied what was entailed: women were to have good manners, such as saying thank you to the janitor or good morning to a professor, and were to dress properly, as “some girls attend church without hat or gloves ... you ... know that it is rather disrespectful.” In other words, learning how to live graciously at university was “training for life” as the lessons it taught women in university would benefit them through their whole lives.⁷² The Society endorsing the idea of gracious living also offered lectures in 1964 on etiquette.⁷³ The idea of gracious living continued to be promoted in the late 1960s, with the Assistant Dean of Women’s report stating in her annual report for 1967-68 that the Wauneita Society offered a “gracious atmosphere” for its big and little sister party, initiations, and coffee party.⁷⁴

The idea of “gracious living” as used in connection with women’s fraternities differed from its meaning within the Wauneita Society because in the fraternity “gracious living” was more of a total lifestyle than in Wauneita. In the late 1960s, fraternities still adhered to ideals of “graciousness,” causing the Dean of Women to remark that they offered “training in gracious, all round living.”⁷⁵ The concept of “gracious living” continued to be present in women’s fraternities in the 1970s. For instance, when the women of one fraternity decided to limit the use of alcohol to “special meals and special reasons,” the Dean of Women, Isabel Munroe, commended their enhancement of “gracious living.”⁷⁶ This idea was so central to fraternities on campus that one fraternity alumna approached Munroe about a resident advisor who did not meet their expectations. She expressed concerns about the advisor’s “grooming” and “social graces” and about her “ability to provide leadership” to the fraternity’s active members. After meeting with the advisor, Munroe concluded that her poor grooming was caused by depression and arranged for the woman to enrol in a personal Self-Advancement Grooming Course. The advisor’s appearance soon improved, but the alumna then complained that she was not

⁷¹ Wauneita Society, Minutes, 8 September 1963, UAA, Acc. 77-63-61.1.

⁷² Records of the Office of the Dean of Women, Mrs. W.H. Johns, “Graciousness in University Living,” UAA, Acc. 74-52-3.4.

⁷³ Wauneita Society, Minutes, 25 February 1964.

⁷⁴ Records of the Office of the Dean of Women, Annual Report of the Assistant of the Dean of Women: Concerns from Women, 1967-68, UAA, Acc. 70-168-67.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Records of the Office of the Dean of Women, Pi Beta Phi, 19 January 1972, UAA, Acc. 77-63-68.

providing the young fraternity women under her influence with “responsiveness and sense of warmth and concerns [sic].” Munroe’s solution was that it would be better all around if the advisor moved out of the fraternity house, since it was “hard” to live “with the girls and yet not actually be one of them.”⁷⁷

By the late 1960s and 1970s, women began to challenge the proscribed gender roles for their sex, and in doing so changed how women participated in women-only clubs and activities. In sports, for instance, women began to play more “male” sports. Yet the reluctance of the general campus society to accept women in non-traditional sports like football was illustrated in the *Gateway* article “Female Footballers Show Impressive Form.” The author ridiculed that

a female football game is fun for fans and players, but the residence girls hardly chuckled as phys ed outclawed them 30 – 0 last Saturday. The fun began when 42 women showed up at the varsity stadium with full equipment on. If you think football pants fit tightly on men you should see these line-ups. The fans showed more interest in the huddles than in the scrimmages ... it was a matter of who could bite, claw, scream, and scratch the most. If it weren’t for face masks, there would be 42 poor complexions around campus this week ... It is entertaining watching a screaming girl run aimlessly around ... The most frequent penalties were for grabbing face masks, pulling the hair, scratching the cheek, biting the forearm, and kicking the referee in the shin ... But, after it was all over everyone conceded the game was good fun, free from any of the seriousness that mars normal football.⁷⁸

Although the female football players rejected gender norms by both participating in a non-traditional sport and being aggressive, even violent, the author attempts to put women back into their place by trivialising the game. Rather than emphasising the player’s skills and the game itself, he focuses on the women’s appearance, the tightness of their pants, and the view the male spectators had of their huddles, which probably gave the audience a view of their backsides. As well, the author reasserts the traditional view of women and sports by assuring the reader that the game was “good fun” and “free from any of the seriousness” of “normal” or male football.⁷⁹ Even women’s aggression was belittled as he detailed the player’s used tactics sometime perceived as being feminine such as “scratching, biting, kicking” to “outclaw” each other on the field of play.⁸⁰ The article demonstrates that while women attempted to redefine their relationship with sport

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 26 September 1968 and 13 January 1969.

⁷⁸ Ed Marchand, “Female Footballers Show Impressive Form,” *Gateway*, 5 November 1965, 17.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

by playing non-traditional games, many people continued to view women as individuals who only participated in sport to have fun, not to win.

Beginning in the late 1960s, the effects of the broader social changes such as those inspired by the women's liberation movement also seeped into women's fraternities, queen contests, and the Wauneita Society, changing how women related to and participated in their activities. Fraternities were caught between wanting to adopt ideas of women's liberation and adhering to 1950 ideas about gender. In the 1970s, for example, the women of Delta Gamma established a women's study program in which its members examined the legal status of women and their post-secondary education. In a letter to Dean Munroe, the fraternity insisted that it "has been concerned about the role of women." For her part, Munroe was so "excited" about their examination of women's roles that she suggested several books that the fraternity should read, including *Born Female: The High Cost of Keeping Women Down*.⁸¹ Similarly, the 1977 Panhellenic Council minutes reported that the Alpha Gamma Deltas were working with the Rape Crisis Centre to arrange for rape seminars and self-defence courses.⁸²

Women of Wauneita were similarly caught between wanting to embrace new social views of women and wanting to maintain traditional roles. For instance, while Wauneita continued to endorse marriage, they also realized the changing nature of women's roles as more women had careers. This changed was reflected in its 1967 lecture series which included talks on both "women and marriage" and "women and career."⁸³ Furthermore, a 1969-70 booklet, *Wauneita on Campus*, detailed changes in the Society, noting that while its focus in 1909 had been friendship, in 1969 its goal was service that included orientating new students, tutoring for Native high school students, volunteering for a mental health program, and investigating the feasibility of a daycare centre.⁸⁴ A second pamphlet in 1971-71 discussed the Orientation Pow-wows (talks) on topics like the psychology of women, which was "designed to help co-eds understand the

⁸¹ Records of the Office of the Dean of Women, Delta Gamma, Letter from Dean Munroe to Delta Gamma, UAA, Acc. 77-63-66; and Caroline Bird with Sara Welles Briller, *Born Female: The High Cost of Keeping Women Down* (New York: D. McKay, 1968).

⁸² Dean of Women, Panhellenic Records, Panhellenic Council Minutes, 12 January 1977.

⁸³ Wauneita Minutes, 14 August 1967.

⁸⁴ Records of the Office of the Dean of Women, *Wauneita on Campus*, (booklet), 1969-70, UAA, Acc. 77-63-58.

exciting challenge of being a woman.”⁸⁵ In the early 1960s, the Wauneita Society had established a big and little sister program to not only help orientate new female students to campus but also to protect them from “over attentive upperclassmen.”⁸⁶ However, in 1970, the Wauneita Society decided to end the program on the grounds that the concept was no longer “sophisticated” enough,⁸⁷ suggesting that women on campus were changing and that clubs like Wauneita needed to change with them.

Pulling away from traditionally structured activities, students began to question a central aspect of the Wauneita Society – its exclusion of men. While changes in Wauneita happened most dramatically at the end of the 1960s, stirrings of discontent among the general university population about Wauneita were already seen in the late 1950s. The challenges to the organisation began when the Students’ Union debated whether or not to make the Wauneita lounge co-ed in 1959. Its decision that enough women used the Wauneita lounge to justify keeping it “closed” to men, prompted the Wauneita president to state “even some unbiased men think that women should have a place also.”⁸⁸ The next year, however, the exclusivity of Wauneita was again challenged by four male students who demanded entrance into the club. In a symbolic confrontation of Wauneita’s female-only clause, the men picketed the Society’s initiation ceremony that fall, carrying signs saying “equal rights for men” and “Integrate Now.”⁸⁹ One of the demonstrators also claimed that “legal action to compel integration on this campus [was] said to be imminent.”⁹⁰ Nothing came of the men’s demand and the next step in the debate for Wauneita integration came in the late 1960s. At a November 1969 meeting, the Wauneita Society itself discussed whether there was a “need for women’s voice,” whether there were problems specific to women, and whether the Students’ Union gave women adequate representation. This internal self-examination demonstrates that the clubwomen themselves began to question Wauneita’s role. The discussion, however, found that the women of Wauneita thought that separate organisations gave women “an opportunity to become involved on a non-competitive aspect of Students’ Union

⁸⁵ Dean of Women, Wauneita pamphlet, 1970-1971, UAA, Accession 77-63-58.

⁸⁶ Wauneita Minutes, 17 September 1970; and Chalus, “From Friedan to Feminism,” 123.

⁸⁷ Wauneita Minutes, 17 September 1970.

⁸⁸ “Open Council Keeps Closed Wauneita,” *Gateway*, 27 November 1959, 10.

⁸⁹ Photograph, *Gateway*, 23 September 1960, 1.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

Council,” meaning that through Wauneita women could participate in student government without actually running for a position since the Society automatically held a council seat. The debate concluded that the Wauneita Society should remain a closed organisation, that it served a useful purpose since although there was a female residence and several women’s fraternities on campus, not every woman could belong to them.⁹¹ Thus, the members of Wauneita still felt that they had a role to play on campus. In 1970, however, the Wauneita Society lost its lounge, although it was not under its own volition.⁹² Prompted by the women’s movement and the demand for equality of the sexes, a motion was made early in the 1970-71 school year by the Students’ Union to open the Wauneita Lounge “to both sexes.” The Students’ Union decided to support this action “lead[ing] the forces of liberation” and have the Society remove the “women-only” sign.⁹³ Wauneita fought the change, stating in its minutes that it would petition for its lounge back.⁹⁴ A vocal member wrote to the *Gateway*, protesting the lack of discussion the Students’ Union had had with the Wauneita Society and saying that the lounge had been made co-ed “without even giving us a chance to defend it.”⁹⁵ The co-ordinator of student activities responded by mocking the Wauneita Society, asking if the women had “a persecution complex.” Arguing against the Wauneitas who were “on the warpath,” he stated that no one had given any reason to maintain the lounge’s segregation, suggesting that perhaps the Wauneita executive had indeed been consulted.⁹⁶ Once its lounge was lost, the Students’ Union proposed other changes and downgraded the Society to the status of a registered club. This time the women did not object and only one requirement – that a Students’ Union club be open to both sexes – bothered the women. Once the Students’ Union assured Wauneita that this would not be necessary, the Society easily accepted the change.⁹⁷ By the early 1970s, the Wauneita Society had first lost its lounge and then its status as a member of the Students’ Union, and eventually it disappeared as a club altogether from the university. Yet, like fraternities and sports, Wauneita demonstrated the ambiguousness of women and their adherence to the women’s

⁹¹ Wauneita Minutes, 26 November 1969.

⁹² Wauneita Minutes, 28 September 1970.

⁹³ Records of the Students’ Union, Council Minutes, 1970-1971, 21 September 1970, UAA, Acc. 78-127.

⁹⁴ Wauneita Minutes, 28 September 1970.

⁹⁵ Alyce Nekolaichuk, “Wauneita Doesn’t Want to Play Games,” *Gateway*, 8 October 1970, 5.

⁹⁶ David Manning, “Has Wauneita Got a Persecution Complex,” *Gateway*, 9 October 1970, 4.

⁹⁷ Council Minutes, 1970-1971, 16 November 1970, Acc.

liberation movement. Women did not whole-heartedly endorse the movement, rather they were selective in which aspects of it they supported.

It was during this period that students also began to oppose queen contests, arguing that they objectified women. The extent of women's participation in queen contests is difficult to gauge, although obviously some women did participate as each contest usually had about five contestants. None of the women I interviewed participated in or attended queen contest events. Leda, an education/arts student in the mid-1960s, had the strongest feelings about the contests: "I really don't care for that kind of thing. So I wouldn't support it," she declared, "I feel it's sexist and I just don't believe in that." At the time, individual students also protested against queen contests. In 1954, for example, undergraduate Jack Newman argued that engineering queens were not chosen for their talent, but rather for their seductive smiles and voluptuous poses. He asserted that only deserving women, those who had talent and were not necessarily beautiful, should be made queens, but that was next to impossible, as intelligent women would not want to participate in such contests. Thus, until there was an academic queen or a music queen, the "conventional ... queen" was actually a "Sex Queen."⁹⁸ By the late 1960s, the Students' Union also reacted negatively towards queen contests. In 1969, it "finally turned thumbs down on beauty contests" by withdrawing financial support. Supporting the motion, vice-president Liz Law stated that "women should not be considered as a sexual object and that a beauty contest is in effect 'a public auction.'"⁹⁹ Secretary Wendy Brown was harsher in her critique of the pageants, saying that "contestants are shallowly judged on their surface appearance and whether they keep their legs together or not."¹⁰⁰ Not all their colleagues agreed with the vice president and secretary; one male council member argued that "[a] good beauty contest is very stimulating."¹⁰¹ That year, in response to the Students' Union's decision, the Interfraternity Council pledged its financial support to send Miss University of Alberta to the Waterloo Winter Carnival Queens Contest. Stating that they were not restricted by the women's movement, the group members claimed that they supported such contests because they were based on

⁹⁸ Jack Newman, "Psychosexual Sedative," *Gateway*, 29 October 1954, 2.

⁹⁹ "Council Socks SFU: Queens," *Gateway*, 9 October 1969, 1.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

women's intelligence, character, and beauty and that they did not treat women as sexual objects.¹⁰² However, perhaps the most vivid condemnation of the queen contest was a photograph of slabs of meat with the caption of "Engineer Queens – 1973."¹⁰³

Despite growing rejection of formal women's organisations and some organised activities, some women continued to embrace them and the ideas that they represented. Negative attitudes about women and sports remained ingrained in both women and men. For instance, although women in the 1970s challenged stereotypes of women's roles, some women, like my interviewee, Jane*, an economics student in the early 1970s, did not easily accept women's participation in sports. Although her mother had played on a semi-professional sports team, Jane* was influenced by social mores that frowned upon women's participation in sports, feeling that sports made a woman less feminine.¹⁰⁴ Jane's* ideas were not exclusive to her. In *Out of Bounds: Women, Sport, and Sexuality*, Helen Lenskyj argues that during the 1970s, society identified female sports players as "tomboys" and "Amazons." These comparisons were not flattering as Amazons were unfeminine images and the tomboy figure was thought to predict lesbianism.¹⁰⁵ The university also promoted and condemned inequalities between male and female sports. For instance, on the Students' Union, the Women's Athletic Association (WAA) was subordinate to the Men's Athletic Associations since only the latter's president had a voting seat.¹⁰⁶ As well, women sports teams did not always have the same facilities as men did. In 1968, when women realised that they did not have a sauna bath in the new phys ed complex that was being planned, they asked Dr. Van Vliet, a professor of physical education, if they could have one. He responded quickly, but women were left wondering why they had to ask for the special facility, which men did not. Women also asked to have equal access to the training room, an area where injuries were treated and medical supplies kept. This time, however, Van Vliet did not give into their demand,

¹⁰² "IFC Supports Queen Contests," *Gateway*, 16 October 1969, 1.

¹⁰³ "Engineer Queens – 1973," *Gateway*, 25 January 1973, 5.

¹⁰⁴ During the 1950s to 1970s, women's sports were directed towards less violent sports. Ringette, for example, exemplified this ideal. Ringette was similar to hockey, yet promoted less aggression, a behaviour that was not socially acceptable for women.

¹⁰⁵ Lenskyj, *Out of Bounds*, 97-98.

¹⁰⁶ According to the SU by-laws, the President of the Women's Athletic Association was considered a member of SU, but had no vote, except in the absence of the President of the Men's Athletic Association. Records of the Students' Union, By-Law #100, Documents, 1971-1972, UAA, Acc. 73-22.

saying that women could not share the same room as men since women could only use the same facility if special arrangements were made. However, this would not be done as “there was no way to treat the small injuries” women received while playing sports.¹⁰⁷ Even though women’s sports received more money, media attention, and improved coaching and facilities in the late 1960s and 1970s, they still suffered from less publicity and promotion than did male sports at the university.¹⁰⁸ For instance, in 1971-72, the University Athletic Board received approximately \$100,320 while the Women’s Athletic Association got only \$30,308.¹⁰⁹ In addition, some women, like Lorraine, occasionally went to see women’s sporting events but more frequently went to the male ones.¹¹⁰ Despite women’s attempts to gain more facilities for themselves and to play non-traditional sports, discrimination against women’s sports continued, endorsed by male students, campus officials, and at times women themselves.

Queen contests further reflect the continuance of the ideal of women as gracious and attractive. Participants in the 1962 Engineering Week so enjoyed their experience that they thanked the engineers for their “kindness and consideration ... enthusiasm and gallantry.”¹¹¹ Dean Sparling also endorsed the contests. In her 1967-68 annual report, she asserted that queen contests were “time consuming” not “time wasting” as contestants not only gained personal contacts for the future but also “interpret[ed]” the university to the larger community of Edmonton.¹¹² The Dean was not the only person on campus to think this way either. After being compared to slabs of beef in 1973, the engineering princesses wrote harsh letters, protesting their negative representation in the *Gateway* and the idea that women who participated in queen contests were not believers in the women’s liberation movement. One princess told the newspaper that she was “under no pressure to play the ‘male stereotype of womanhood’” and that she was “not exploited”; instead the engineers “accepted me as a person.”¹¹³ Another candidate asserted that she was an avid supporter of the women’s liberation movement and questioned why she

¹⁰⁷ “Women and Phys Ed,” *Gateway*, 4 October 1969, 4.

¹⁰⁸ Lamont, “*We Can Achieve*,” 80, 84, 86.

¹⁰⁹ Records of the Students’ Union, Documents, University Athletic Board, 1971-72, UAA, Acc. 73-22.

¹¹⁰ Lorraine, interview.

¹¹¹ “Queen Week Thanks,” *Gateway*, 16 February 1962, 5.

¹¹² Dean of Women, Annual Report.

¹¹³ “Princess Refuses to Submit,” *Gateway*, 6 February 1973, 5.

could not be both a supporter and be “appreciated as a woman.”¹¹⁴ Neither princess agreed with the representation of queens as slabs of beef, but argued that the queen contests had been positive experiences. Both sides of the argument for queen contests negotiated the ideal. Those against the contests objected to their objectification of women, while those in favour of the contests believed they enhanced their roles as women and that women could be both queens and feminists.

Female fraternities promoted ideals of graciousness into the 1970s. At the same time as Wauneita was cancelling its big and little sister program, fraternities were unrelentingly endorsing such programs among their members. This relationship, moreover, could prove beneficial to the members. In one a case, a young woman came to speak to Dean Munroe about her big sister who had seemed to undergo a personality change, after which the Dean spoke with the fraternity’s Alumnae Advisor Committee, which in turn helped the big sister with the problems she was having.¹¹⁵ In addition, well into the 1970s, the rushing activities of the fraternities remained similar to what they had been like in the 1950s. In the 1950s, women’s fraternities would hold “ice water parties” and “at homes.”¹¹⁶ By 1976, the rushing techniques remained similar. The minutes of the August 1976 meeting detailed the upcoming September Rush in which the four women’s fraternities decided to host “At homes” and theme parties.¹¹⁷ Even though their dedication to the traditional image of womanhood, hurt fraternities initially as membership declined between 1967 and 1973, by 1974 it began to grow again.

Table 4-1: Fraternity September Rush Totals, 1967-1974¹¹⁸

Year	1967-68	1968-69	1969-70	1970-71	1971-72	1972-73	1973-74
Pledges	92	72	81	34	NA	NA	53

Throughout the period, fraternity women demonstrated the many ways in which women’s liberation and the redefinition of women’s roles took shape. On the one hand, they

¹¹⁴ “Princess Breaks Silence,” *Gateway*, 6 February 1973, 5.
¹¹⁵ Dean of Women, Pi Beta Phi, 4 April 1973 and July 1973, Acc. 77-63-68.
¹¹⁶ “New Drink Offered Straight,” *Gateway*, 26 September 1958, 3.
¹¹⁷ Dean of Women, Panhellenic Council Minutes, 30 August 1976, Acc. 73-22-13.
¹¹⁸ Table reflects numbers of pledges from formal September Rush only, it does not include those women who pledged at other times. Dean of Women, Alpha Gamma Delta, Acc. 77-63-65; Panhellenic Council, Acc. 77-63-64; and Panhellenic Council, Acc. 77-63-71.

endorsed the movement offering women education in liberation, but on the other hand, they consistently upheld the ideals of the traditional woman, endorsing rituals like “pinning” and teaching women how to live graciously through hosting rush parties and providing role models, the big sister, who practiced these ideals.

In contrast, Wauneita did not survive through the 1970s. Elaine Chalus, “From Friedan to Feminism: Gender and Change at the University of Alberta, 1960-1970,” argues that Wauneita’s decline was due in part to its inability to stay in “step with the time. Women who were protesting against beauty contest ... were not likely to find talks on charm, modelling ... enlivening.”¹¹⁹ Yet, the Wauneita Society was not all that out of step as the Students’ Union reflected similar attitudes. Rather, Wauneita demonstrated the ambiguity of many of the women at university both accepting aspects of change and rejecting other. Perhaps the greatest weakness of Wauneita lay not in its ability to change quickly enough, but its gender exclusive nature. Being gender exclusive was not out of character with the women’s movement, however, Wauneita could not keep up and could not hope to have every woman be active within it as the number of women at university grew. As well, it limited itself by becoming too embroiled in its social aspect, forsaking politics at a time when more and more women were becoming politicised. For instance, through much of its existence, Wauneita had been an active participant in the Students’ Union with its voting seat on council. However, in 1967, Wauneita decided that since the Students’ Union was “more and more a legislative body” and since the Wauneita saw itself as more a “program” or social committee, it felt that membership on the campus activities board “would be more use to [Wauneita] than membership in council.”¹²⁰ Wauneita’s rejection of politics was also a dismissal of many of its members that it claimed to represent. In fact, the seeming successor to the Wauneita Society, the Women’s Program Centre, was based upon the politics of the women’s liberation, yet it did not deny the Wauneita tenet that women needed a separate organisation, rather in its proposal to council it asked for approval on the basis on it being for women. However, unlike Wauneita, it was a political rather than social organisation as it aimed to close the

¹¹⁹ Elaine Chalus, “From Friedan to Feminism: Gender and Change at the University of Alberta, 1960-1970,” in *Standing on New Ground: Women in Alberta*, ed. Catherine Cavanaugh and Randi R. Warne (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1993), 138.

¹²⁰ Council Minutes, 1966-67, 13 February 1967, UAA, Acc. 73-22.

“disparity between males and females.”¹²¹ The rise of a political women’s group while the Wauneita declined suggested that activist women were no longer content to participate only in the social arena. Yet, its dismissal of politics did not necessarily display Wauneita’s inability to keep up with the times, rather it showed that Wauneita may have realised (as the persistence of fraternities and queen contests demonstrated) that not all women wanted a social community built purely on politics.

In activities like Wauneita, women’s fraternities and sports, and queen contests, women’s construction of communities and gender can be viewed at the University of Alberta. Within these activities, women constructed and negotiated the ideals of womanhood through their membership, their rituals and language, and the ways in which they dealt with social changes like the women’s movement. Women created their own space at the university, which both endorsed and rejected new roles for women.

¹²¹ Students’ Union, Reports, 1971-72, “Proposal for Setting up a Women’s Program Centre,” Acc. 73-22.

Conclusion

No two women were alike at the University of Alberta. From 1950 to 1975, some undergraduate women students actively challenged the socially proscribed norms, while others women were conservative in their views and maintained traditional gender boundaries. Many women, however, combined both extremes, creating new ideas of womanhood in which women continued to follow some aspects of their expected roles, while rejecting others. Women's perceptions of their gender roles were not shaped in isolation; mainstream society, university officials, and other students on campus contributed to how women constructed gender. They based their academic choices on their own desires, their internalisation of social norms, and their knowledge of what job opportunities were available to them. Personal attitudes towards about sexuality and politics were formed in light of university expectations concerning their behaviour as well as by their own ideas. The extracurricular activities represented by the Wauneita Society, women's fraternities and sports, and queen contests also reflected women's construction of gender. In their rituals, membership, and activities, women accepted certain norms and abandoned others in their rituals, membership, and activities. Throughout the period, women picked and chose what they wanted, basing their decisions on what was considered to be acceptable on campus and within the broader society, as well as on social norms of campus and the general society as well as on their own desires. At times, women's choices were different from the cultural ideal; yet, despite the social changes that occurred between 1950 and 1970, most women chose to uphold the status quo.

However, while the gender roles and ideas that women embraced, redefined, or created affected their post-university lives, they did not define their whole life experience. Women's university experience was not "the closing of the book" but rather the "ending of Chapter One."¹ "Our years at University," argued nursing student Shirley Stinson in her class history of 1953, "constitute a colour which will never be duplicated in the pictures of our lives. Let us utilize the knowledge and experiences of University,

¹ Shirley Stinson, "Class History," University of Alberta yearbook, *Evergreen and Gold* (1953), 45.

ever adding to this colour yet never losing its original hue.”² Women at the University of Alberta did just what Shirley Stinson recommended. Their university experiences did not define their subsequent lives, but they enriched them. Lorraine remembers that

the university experience broadened my horizons. I know that this is a trite expression, but it indeed did. It made me aware of a lot of things that were out there in the world that otherwise you would never get to experience.³

Since the 1970s, the history of higher education in Canada moved from the periphery of social history into the mainstream,⁴ going beyond the superficial exploration of higher education to studies of the complex nature of university by investigating the relationships between universities, educators and students to create a field that is “vibrant and promising.”⁵ Future works could include a comparative examination of universities to study how regional locations affected universities and students. In particular, studies about students that include the oral histories of male and female students would give further depth to the study of gender at university. The study of higher education in Canada is one filled with possibilities and historians should continue to explore its rich history.

² Ibid.

³ Lorraine, interview by author, tape recording, Two Hills, Alberta, 2 April 2001.

⁴ Donald Wilson, “Some Observations on Recent Trends in Canadian Education History,” in *Contemporary Approaches to Canadian History*, ed. Carl Berger (Toronto: Copp Clark Pitman, 1987), 222.

⁵ Paul Axelrod and John Reid, “Introduction,” in *Youth, University, and Canadian Society*, ed. Paul Axelrod and John Reid (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1989), xi.

Appendix A

Women's Experiences at the University of Alberta: Questionnaire

Name: _____
 Hometown: _____
 Ethnic Background: _____
 Faculty: _____
 Undergraduate Degree: _____
 Maiden name: _____
 Rural or Urban: _____
 Dates Attended: _____ to _____
 Department: _____
 Year: _____

Pre-university

1. What did your parents do for a living? How did your parents feel about you attending university? Did their occupations affect your choices at university? What did they think of your course of study?
2. Were you the first generation at university? Were you the first woman of your family to attend university or did you have other female relatives who had attended university? How did this affect the choices you made at university and your university career?

University

3. Why did you choose to study at the University of Alberta? Why did you choose your particular program or course of study? Did your socio-economic status and your being a woman affect your choice? How?
4. Was gender a significant factor in your university life? How?
5. Where did you live while you attended university? Were there any rules and restrictions? If so, how did you feel about them?
6. How did you support yourself (e.g. work, scholarships, family, loans)? If you worked, at what did you work? If you received scholarships, what were they for?
7. Who composed your community or your circle of friends at the University of Alberta? How did you meet them? What did you do together (e.g. movies, dances, coffee, study nights)?
8. Do you feel that your background (ethnic, socio-economic, or otherwise) affected your university career and extra-curricular activities? How?

Extracurricular Activities

9. In what extracurricular activities did you participate? Why did you choose these?

10. Were there any organisations at the University of Alberta that were specifically for women that you knew about? (e.g. Wauneita / Women's Fraternities / Blue Stockings Club / Women's Athletics Association)?
11. What did you think about the Wauneita Society? Did you attend any of their lectures or other events (e.g. formals / Christmas Parties / Philanthropies)? Were you an active member?
12. How much did you know about the male and female fraternities on campus? What was your attitude towards them while you were attending university? Did you ever attend any of their events (e.g. Songfest or dances)?
13. How did you feel about women's sports teams and intramurals on campus? Did you think they were treated equally to the men's sports teams (e.g. adequately funded, equal access to facilities)? Did you participate in any of the sports offered at the University of Alberta?
14. Different departments and faculties on campus have sponsored "Queens contests." Were you aware of them? Did you ever participate in one? If yes, which one? What did you think of the Queen contests at university?

Sexuality and Gender

15. During your time at the University of Alberta, were there any "women's issues" discussed (e.g. marriage, sexuality, abortion)? Did you consider these to be "women's issues"?
16. What were your ideas about marriage before you attended university? Did your ideas change (or remain static) because of your university experience or in spite of it?
17. When you attended the University of Alberta, what were your views about sexuality (sexual intercourse, sexual behaviour, birth control)? How did your views compare or differ from those of your friends?
18. Did you ever attend one of Dr. Vant's lectures? What did you think about them?
19. Were women's liberation, abortion, and day-care care points of public discussion? What were your views about these? Did your attitudes change while you were at university? If no, did you ever consider these ideas while you attended university?
20. Do you remember any structures at the University of Alberta for women specifically (e.g. Dean of Women)? If yes, what view did you hold towards them?

Politics on campus

21. How aware were you of the University of Alberta as part of a larger community? Did you view it as being isolated from social, economic, and political developments?
22. Were you politically active in campus politics or in the municipal, provincial, or federal government (e.g. did you vote, have party membership, public activism)? Were your friends? How politically active do you think students were in general? (e.g. apathetic/involved)

23. What did you consider to be significant political issues about the university and about Albertan or Canadian society?
24. Do you remember university policies and governance changing or remaining static in regards to their attitudes towards students and/or women students?
25. Were there any debates about women's roles on campus or in society? Do you think male and female students, in particular, remained consistent in their views? What did you consider women's role on campus and in society to be? How did your views about women change or remain the same?

Post-university

26. After you earned your undergraduate degree, did you continue with your education at either the University of Alberta or at another university? If yes, in what field, when and why? If no, why not? Did you ever wish that you had continued your education?
27. Did you marry while you were at university, after university, or not at all? Why? Did you meet your husband at university?
28. What did you do once you finished university? Did you work in your chosen field or did you do different things?
29. In retrospect, would you say that your university experience had a significant impact on your life or on how you perceived yourself?

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